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After **Stephanie Mencimer** first raised the question of whether the plaintiffs in the Obamacare case had standing (“In Search of the Obamacare 4,” page 5), Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg asked about it during oral arguments before the Supreme Court; the illustration is by **Matt Chase**, who lives in Washington, DC, and has done work for *Vanity Fair*, *The Atlantic*, and the *New York Times*. **Mark Follman**, **Julia Lurie**, and **Jaeah Lee** (“What Does Gun Violence Really Cost?” page 18) are part of a *Mother Jones* team that’s been investigating gun violence since the 2012 mass shooting in Aurora, Colorado; the package’s photographers include **1 Carlos Javier Ortiz**, whose work is in the Library of Congress’ permanent collection, and Pulitzer Prize winner **Preston Gannaway**. **2 Justin Maxon** (“Black Deaths Matter,” page 34) has documented unsolved killings in Chester, Pennsylvania, for nearly seven years; the text is by **3 Kai Wright**, the former editor of *Colorlines*, and *MoJo* editorial fellow **4 Edwin Rios**. **5 Maddie Oatman** (“Attack of the Killer Beetles,” page 40) traveled to her native Rocky Mountains to report on an infestation that threatens to deforest the West. **6 John Hill** (“Hung out to Dry,” page 44) spent a decade covering state government for California newspapers, winning a George Polk Award in 2004; the art is by Barcelona-based collage maker **Max-o-matic**.



THE PURPOSE OF INVESTMENT

"The purpose of socially responsible investing is to infiltrate and pervert finance to do good." – Amy Domini

According to the Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research, "economics is fundamentally about efficiently allocating resources so as to maximize the welfare of individuals. It is about improving people's standard of living."

Finance, including the stock market, should help to drive that larger economic purpose. This is not a new idea—the Securities and Exchange Commission was created in the midst of the Great Depression to address the serious risks to society posed by unregulated capital markets. Too many economists and investors, however, have ignored that larger public purpose, focusing instead on one all-consuming problem: how to understand and predict the movements of the stock market, and how to "outperform." Little attention has been paid to how investors can effectively allocate capital to maximize the welfare of individuals, or society.

The damage caused by that massive blind spot is all around us.

The annual *Financial Times* 500, a list of the largest corporations in the world by market capitalization, can also be seen as a list of the choices global investors have made. The annual list has included a mix of value-creators and value-destroyers, including companies allegedly responsible for some of the most egregious harms.

Humanity is now using natural resources 50 percent faster than what Earth can renew, meaning that we are currently operating as if we lived on 1.5 Earths. In the developed world, the news is even worse.

Our deficit relationship with the Earth is the result of many macroeconomic factors. A key factor, however, has been a myopic focus on stock price that ignores the consequences of investment decisions and the real-world impact of the corporations whose shares are bought and sold. Even for many investors that recognize these challenges, climate change and biodiversity loss are treated as financial risks to be avoided, or hedged against, not critical problems to solve.

And what of the hidden multitudes that manufacture our products and grow our food? Who will consider their interests? What about the bees that pollinate the crops we need to survive? These considerations rarely turn up in the corporate reports that form the basis for investor decision-making.

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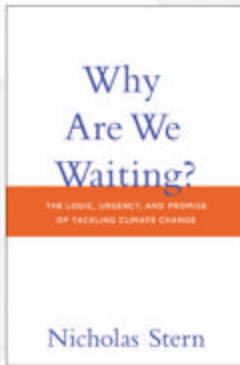


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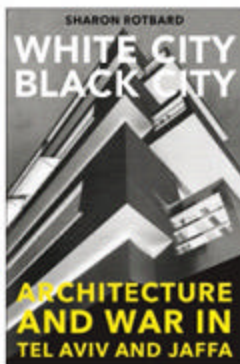
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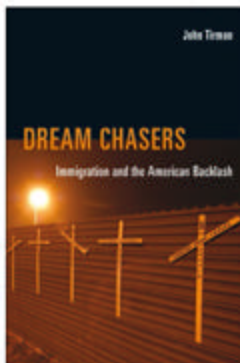
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OUTFRONT



SMALL CLAIMS

IN SEARCH OF THE OBAMACARE 4

I went looking for the four ordinary people who could cost millions of Americans their health care.

When I saw the white stretch limousine parked out front, I knew I'd found the right place. I walked down the gravel driveway toward the white single-level house with trepidation; the owner's Facebook page had suggested the possibility of pit bulls. But I was greeted at the door by David King, a garrulous 64-year-old self-employed limo driver who has lent his name to what may be the weightiest case to come before the Supreme Court in years. I'd come unannounced to King's modest home in Fredericksburg, Virginia, to learn why he'd agreed to headline a legal assault that, if success-

ful, could hobble the Affordable Care Act and result in millions of Americans losing their health insurance.

Asked what he might get out of *King v. Burwell*, the burly, mustachioed Vietnam vet replied that the only benefit he anticipated was the satisfaction of smashing the signature achievement of the president he loathes. Obamacare, King explains, bilks hardworking taxpayers to support welfare recipients. Those people who might end up without insurance? He didn't care, because "they're probably not paying for it anyway."

Of course, you can't challenge a law simply because

you hate it. Legally, King's case rests on his claim that he has been personally harmed by the law, specifically its subsidies to help people buy health insurance. He alleges that the subsidies are illegal in states without insurance exchanges and put him in a position where he must get health insurance or pay a penalty.

If five Supreme Court justices buy this argument, the stakes are huge: More than 13 million people could lose their subsidies and about 8 million could lose their health insurance altogether. Public health experts estimate that nearly 10,000 of them could die every year as a result. Premiums for some plans could skyrocket by as much as 256 percent. The insurance markets in more than 30 states could implode.

The case is the work of the Competitive Enterprise Institute, a libertarian think tank funded by pharmaceutical firms, the Koch brothers, and Google, among others. While the legal logic behind the suit is obtuse (much of it hinges on what one appeals judge called "a tortured, nonsensical" interpretation of two sentences in the law), its goal is simple: As the center's then-chairman declared in 2010, Obamacare "has to be killed as a matter of political hygiene."

But first CEI had to recruit real people who could claim they had been harmed by the Affordable Care Act. That led them to King and his three fellow plaintiffs, one

man and two women. The four had been largely absent from coverage of the lawsuit, but after the Supreme Court agreed to hear the case this spring, I set out to find out just how Obamacare would hurt them.

King's situation was typical of what I found. He wouldn't say whether he currently had health coverage, but he was adamant that he would never take advantage of Obamacare, no matter what. Last year, according to court filings, his income was \$39,000. With an Obamacare subsidy, he could have purchased a health plan for as little as \$275 a month (or less, if he weren't a smoker). Without the subsidy, the same plan would cost \$648 a month. Most importantly, for purposes of the case, King wasn't actually required to buy coverage at all: Under the law, he qualifies for a financial hardship exemption because the cost of subsidized insurance is more than 8 percent of his income.

Plaintiff No. 2 was Brenda Levy, a 64-year-old substitute teacher who lives outside of Richmond, Virginia. With her wild, frizzy hair and earthy clothes, Levy looks like an aging hippie. When I met her at her log-cabin-style house, she mentioned that she'd once belonged to the Sierra Club and used to read *Mother Jones*. Levy insisted she leads "a quiet life," but she is politically active. She's donated to conservative causes and has been involved

in opposing gay rights. In 2013, she helped organize a rally to protest the Boy Scouts' plan to admit gay kids.

Surprisingly, she didn't recall exactly how she had been selected as a plaintiff in the case. "I'm gonna have to ask them how they found me," she said. When I talked to her in January, more than a year after the case was filed, she'd still never met the lawyers handling it. Asked if she realized that her lawsuit could potentially wipe out health coverage for millions, she looked befuddled. "I don't want things to be more difficult for people," she said. "I don't like the idea of throwing people off their health insurance." She was under the impression that expanding Medicaid might help anyone who lost their insurance—unaware that Medicaid expansion was actually part of Obamacare, or that the same groups backing her lawsuit have opposed this expansion in her state.

Levy claimed Obamacare gives the government control over Americans' medical treatment and had caused insurance premiums to rise. She told me her monthly premiums, purchased outside the exchange, were more than \$1,500, which she attributed to health woes, including two hip replacements and two craniotomies. "I've had some holes drilled in my head," she quipped. Levy hadn't checked out the plans she qualifies for under Obamacare,

ALIVE AND KICKING

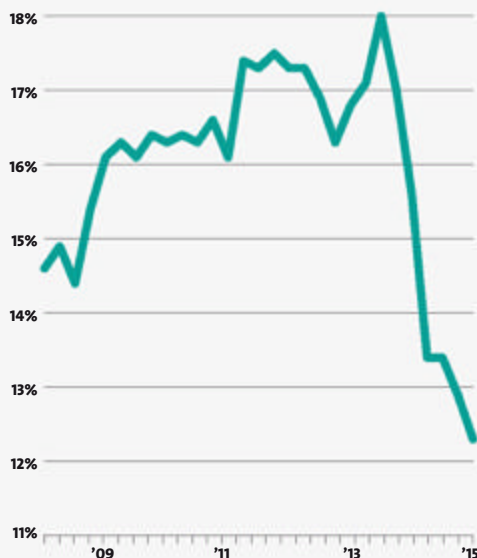
After a bumpy start, Obamacare is in fine health. (For now.)

When Obamacare launched its glitchy insurance marketplace in October 2013, a measly **106,000** people signed up in its first month. Since then, nearly **30 MILLION** Americans have gotten health insurance under Obamacare.

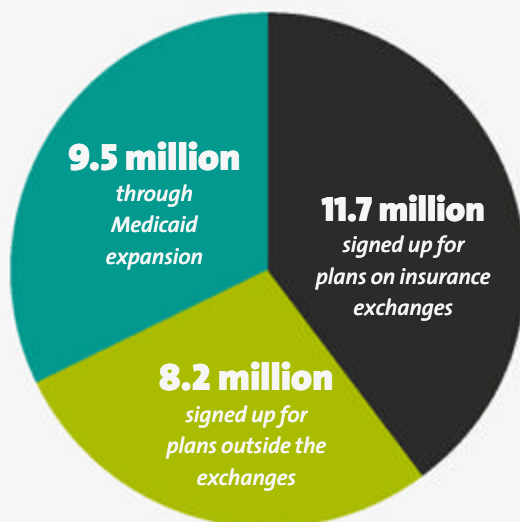
Number of adults without health insurance in 2013: **41 MILLION**
Number today: **30 MILLION**

Annual number of people who would be uninsured if not for Obamacare over the next decade: **AT LEAST 24 MILLION**

Percentage of adults without health insurance



Insurance enrollments under Obamacare



but an affidavit filed by the government in *King v. Burwell* indicates that she could have purchased a low-cost plan on the federal exchange for \$149 a month.

Tracking down the third plaintiff wasn't so easy. The home address 56-year-old Rose Luck had provided in legal filings turned out to be an extended-stay motel on a commercial strip in Petersburg, Virginia. When I finally reached her by phone, Luck hung up on me. Contacted via Facebook, she responded, "Please leave me alone." But social media and public records provide a snapshot of her life. On her Facebook page, she has called Obama the "anti-Christ" and voiced her belief that he came to power because "he got his Muslim people to vote for him." She has warned that Obamacare will cost people \$77,000 a year.

Since the late 1990s, Luck and her husband have faced legal judgments for nearly \$5,000 in unpaid medical bills, something that typically happens to people with inadequate or no insurance. (The judgments have since been paid off.) Luck's Facebook page also made clear that she had experienced serious health problems, raising questions about her insistence that she would prefer to go uninsured or buy high-deductible catastrophic coverage. According to government filings, the cheapest plan available to her on the exchange would cost \$333 per month.

And like King, she is eligible for a hardship waiver.

The final plaintiff was Doug Hurst, another Virginian in his early 60s. According to bankruptcy filings, Hurst and his wife had more than \$8,500 in out-of-pocket medical expenses in 2009. His insurance premiums in 2010 were \$655 a month. Under Obamacare, Hurst could have purchased a bronze health plan for \$62 a month. I never spoke with him, but I reached his wife, Pam, on the phone. She declined to talk about the case or her family's experiences with the health care system. (In 2009, her 37-year-old daughter died following a long struggle with schizoaffective disorder.) She told me angrily, "I'm very well aware of my situation. You are not. You are not aware of extenuating circumstances. I don't have to justify my life, the loss of my child, which included the loss of a business, to anyone, do you understand?"

The weakness of the *King* plaintiffs' individual claims of injury—particularly given the fact that Obamacare would likely help, not hurt, them—suggests that it wasn't easy to find people to join CEI's lawsuit. When I mentioned this to Michael Carvin, the plaintiffs' lead lawyer, he bristled. "Linda Brown was the only plaintiff in *Brown v. Board of Education*," he retorted, invoking the Supreme Court case that led to school

desegregation. "Does that suggest there weren't a lot of people who supported her point of view?" (In fact, Linda Brown's father was one of 13 original plaintiffs in that case, which was filed as a class action.)

During the oral arguments before the Supreme Court in March, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg quizzed Carvin about whether his clients actually had the legal standing to bring the case. "At least one plaintiff has to have a concrete stake in these questions," she said. "They can't put them as ideological questions." Carvin responded that the lower courts had accepted his clients' qualifications. Ginsburg wasn't deterred from probing further. "The court has an obligation to look into it on its own," she said.

Of all the plaintiffs, only Doug Hurst appeared for the hearing. He didn't say a word, but Pam Hurst gave a statement on the courthouse steps. (She could not be a plaintiff because she's old enough to be on Medicare.)

As for David King, the limo driver, he will probably never face the burdens of Obamacare. The *Wall Street Journal* reported that he is likely eligible for free health care through the Veterans Administration, further undermining his claim. And if that doesn't work out, he will be eligible for Medicare when he turns 65 in October.

—Stephanie Mancimer

46% of Americans disapprove of Obamacare. Yet many approve of most of its major components:

Insurance exchanges:
78% APPROVE

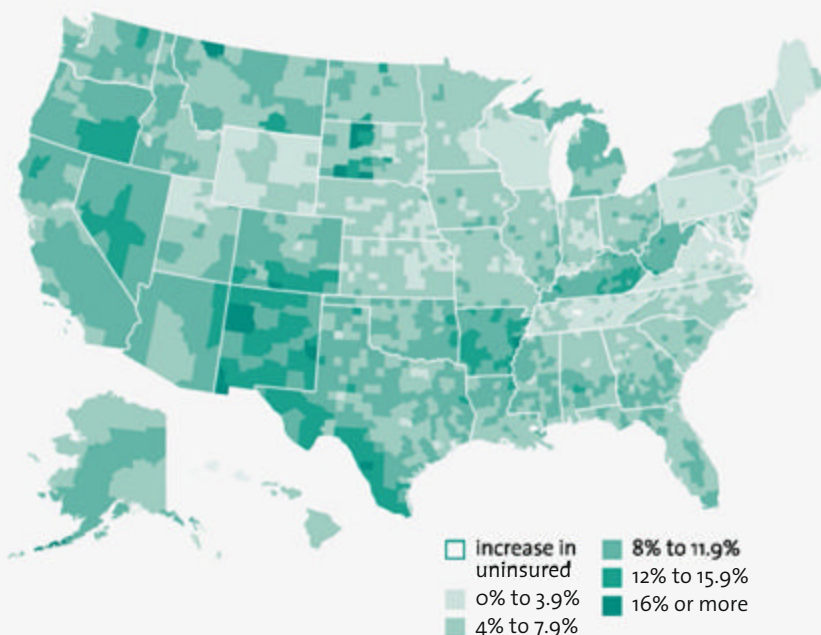
Subsidies for buying insurance: **76% APPROVE**

Medicaid expansion:
75% APPROVE

Requiring large employers to insure workers:
60% APPROVE

Requiring individuals to buy insurance:
35% APPROVE

Change in insured Americans, by county, 2013 to 2014



3.7 MILLION people can't get affordable coverage because 22 states won't implement Obamacare's Medicaid expansion.

8.2 MILLION people could lose coverage if the Supreme Court rules against subsidies on federal exchanges. Of those, **9,800** could die annually due to lack of insurance.

3% of the uninsured say it's because they oppose Obamacare or would rather pay a tax penalty.

Times Congress has voted to repeal Obamacare (as of March): **56**

—Dave Gilson



MISCONCEPTIONS

THE HOBBY LOBBY EFFECT

A simple, cheap Colorado program slashed teen pregnancy and abortion rates. So naturally conservatives are trying to kill it.

In late 2007, the Colorado department of public health received an unusual request: A private foundation wanted to foot the bill for providing inexpensive, reversible birth control to any low- or moderate-income woman who wanted it—so long as it was allowed to remain anonymous.

The state said yes, and over the next seven years, 18,500 intrauterine devices (IUDs) and 14,600 hormonal contraceptive implants were distributed.

The \$27 million program has been, by most measures, a huge success. Colorado's teen birthrate has dropped faster than the

falling nationwide average. Between 2010 and 2012, women on Medicaid avoided an estimated 4,300 to 9,700 unwanted births, saving the state as much as \$111 million. The state's abortion rate has also cratered, falling 42 percent among women ages 15 to 19 and 18 percent among women ages 20 to 24 between 2009 and 2013.

"The return on investment and the benefit to women, to families, and to the state are very clear," says state Rep. KC Becker, a Democrat who cowrote a bipartisan bill to fund the program now that the secret donor's grant is ending. The effort is likely to pass the Democratic-controlled House. But in the state Senate, where the GOP holds a one-vote majority, abortion politics—and the Supreme Court's *Hobby Lobby* decision—could scuttle the plan.

At issue is the belief that IUDs can end pregnancies—the same notion that led the Hobby Lobby chain to challenge the Obama administration's requirement that employers provide insurance that covers contraception. (Last June, the Supreme Court ruled in its favor, invoking the

JASON SCHNEIDER

New Alternatives Fund



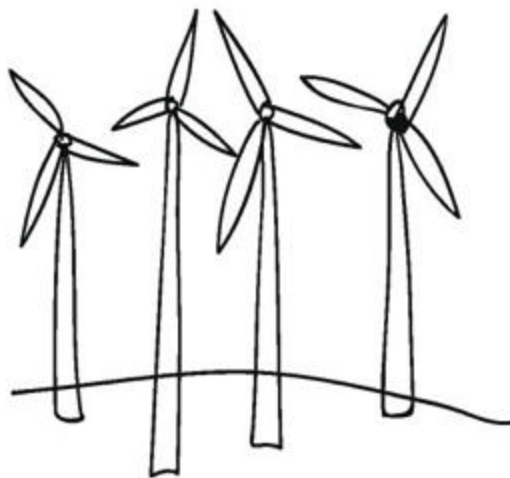
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70 Years After the Camps

PHOTOGRAPHS BY PAUL KITAGAKI JR. AND DOROTHEA LANGE

company's religious liberty.) IUDs work by preventing fertilization, though on rare occasion they can prevent a fertilized egg from implanting in the uterus. Many people who believe that life begins at conception consider this akin to abortion.

"By the time you get to that implantation point, we are not talking about a fertilized egg; we're talking about a new individual that's growing," says Republican state Sen. Kevin Lundberg, who chairs the Colorado Senate's health and human services committee. "It's clear to many professionals that [an IUD] jeopardizes a child that may have been formed through fertilization—'jeopardizes' means kills."

As for contraceptive implants, Lundberg says, those concerns don't apply—but he still is queasy about state funding. "Should we be providing long-term contraceptives to young, unmarried girls? Are we saying, 'Go ahead and have sex—just don't get pregnant?'" (He adds that "far too often young women die from the pill.")

"Contraception used to be an area of common ground," says Morgan Carroll, the Democrats' leader in the state Senate. "I can recall days when we were all fighting together to reduce teen pregnancy, to reduce abortions." She still hopes the funding will pass if she can rustle up a few votes from Republicans.

In the end, Carroll says, conservatives may see their position backfire. "We so often have this position of Republican men mansplaining our lady parts and how they work, like we're too dumb to understand science and make our own decisions," she says. "To oppose this is a very serious political mistake."

—Nick Baumann

In early 1945, the federal government started to open the internment camps where it had held 120,000 Japanese Americans for much of World War II. Seven decades later, photographer Paul Kitagaki Jr. has been tracking down the internees pictured in wartime images by photographers like Dorothea Lange (who photographed Kitagaki's own family).

So far, he's identified more than 50 survivors, often reshooting them in the locations where they were originally photographed. Seven-year-olds Helene Nakamoto Mihara (left, in bottom photo) and Mary Ann Yahiro (center) were photographed by Lange outside their school in San Francisco in 1942.

Both were sent to a camp in Utah. Yahiro (right, in top photo) was separated from her mother, who died in another camp.



TO PROTECT AND PRESERVE

SYRIA'S MONUMENTS MEN

The Islamic State is bulldozing ancient treasures. These courageous activists risk it all to protect them.

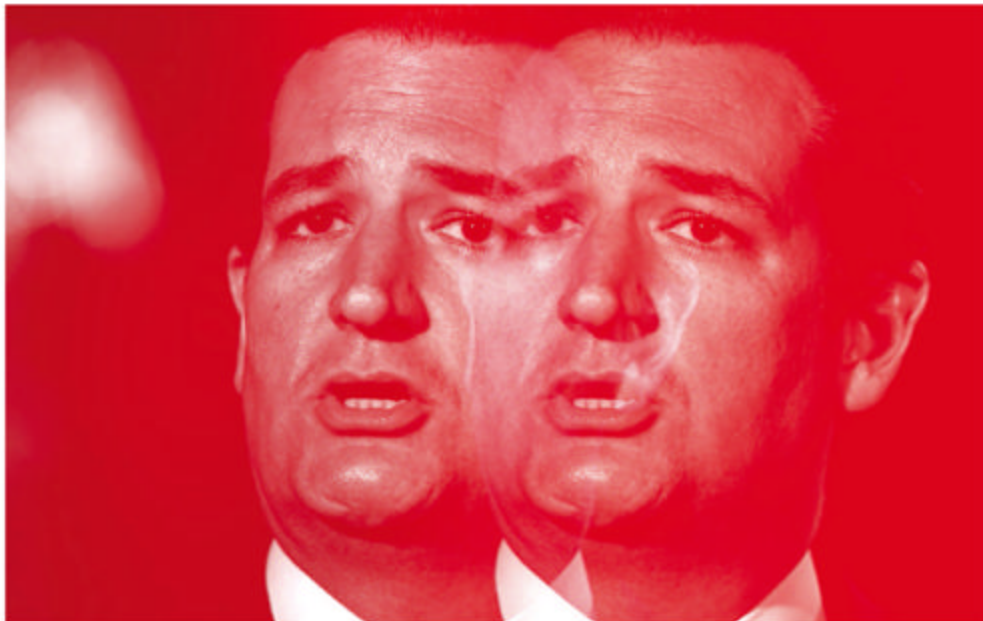
In early March, Ahmed Salem crossed the border between Turkey and Syria and entered ISIS territory. He was armed with nothing more than a notepad, a camera, and a phone, the contents of which, if he were caught, could get him killed. The 28-year-old former archaeology graduate student's mission: to photograph the destruction of his country's ancient treasures.

Salem, whose name has been changed to protect his identity, is part of a small underground network of activists who have been secretly documenting and sometimes preventing the ransacking of one of the world's richest archaeological areas. Much of their work has focused on ISIS, which has been waging open war on Syria's and Iraq's antiquities. In February, the Islamist group released a video of its militants smashing Assyrian artifacts in the central museum in Mosul, Iraq. They also jackhammered the face of a 3,000-year-old winged bull and broke apart 2,000-year-old statues. Days earlier, ISIS insurgents burned thousands of rare books and manuscripts in the city's library. The following week, they bulldozed ruins at the Assyrian site of Nimrud and destroyed a UNESCO World Heritage Site in northern Iraq.

What ISIS doesn't destroy, it steals to peddle on the international black market, tapping into an increasingly important source of revenue. "The looting is much more intensive and criminalized in ISIS-held territories," says Amr Al-Azm, the former head of archaeological research at the Syrian department of antiquities, who has

been working closely with the activists. Al-Azm has dubbed the underground preservationists the "Monuments Men" in a nod to the Allied unit that recovered European

art from the Nazis during World War II. The risks are immense: "If they're in ISIS territory, they could be killed or incarcerated at any moment," Al-Azm says.



DÉJÀ CRUZ

Politician Ted Cruz contradicts lawyer Ted Cruz.

Presidential hopeful Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas) talks a good game as a big-government-bashing, tort-reform-pushing, death-penalty-advocating conservative. But back when he was a private appellate lawyer charging \$695 an hour, Cruz forcefully argued positions that contradict what he now espouses. Some examples from the Ted Cruz Wayback Machine:

FEDERAL STIMULUS MONEY

THEN: In 2009, he wrote a brief arguing that giving federal stimulus money to retired Texas teachers "will directly further the greater purpose of economic recovery for America."

NOW: Obama's economic program is "yet another rehash of the same big-government stimulus programs that have consistently failed to generate jobs."

BIG JURY AWARDS

THEN: As a lawyer, Cruz defended a \$54 million jury award to a severely disabled New Mexico man who had been raped in a group home, asserting that "a large punitive damages award is justified by the need to deter conduct that is hard to detect and often goes unpunished."

NOW: Wants to spread Texas-style tort reform—which caps punitive damages at \$750,000—to the rest of the nation.

THE DEATH PENALTY

THEN: Cruz worked on the Supreme Court case of a Louisiana man who'd been wrongfully sentenced to death, stating that prosecutorial misconduct undermined "public confidence in the criminal-justice system."

NOW: "I trust the criminal-justice system to operate, to protect the rights of the accused, and to administer justice to violent criminals."

—David Corn and Andy Kroll

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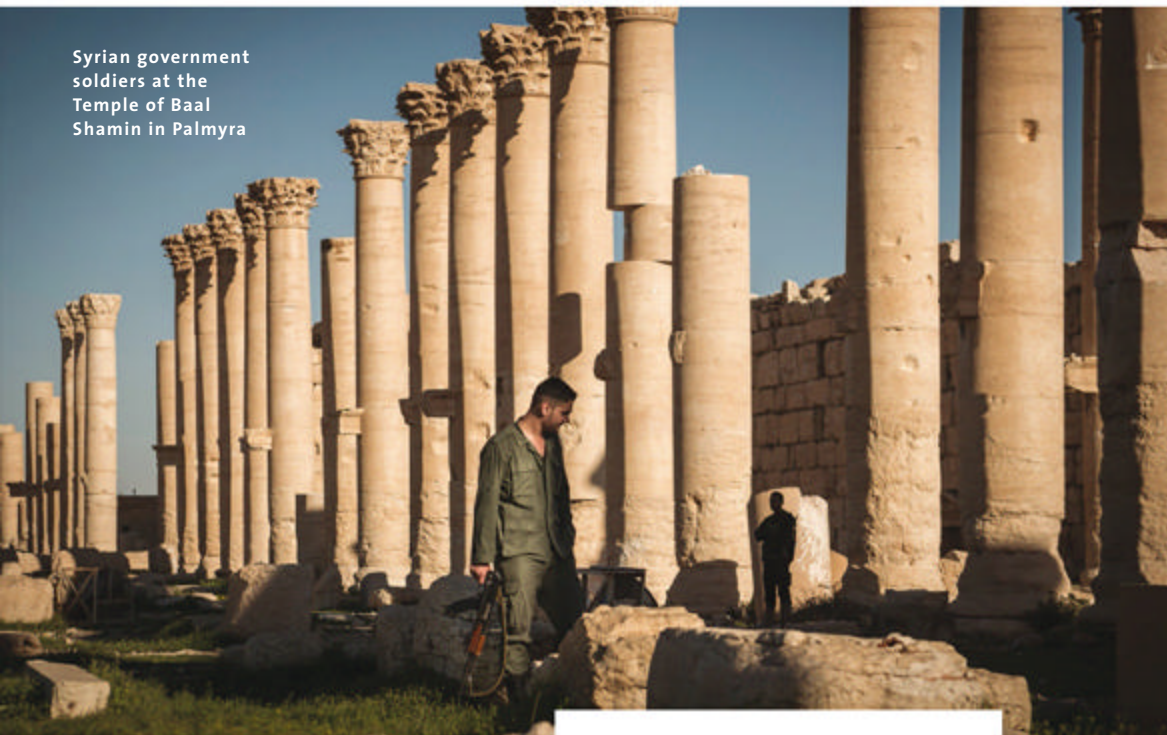
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Syrian government soldiers at the Temple of Baal Shamin in Palmyra



While ISIS may be the worst offender, no group involved in the Syrian conflict has clean hands. In return for kickbacks, government soldiers have allowed the plunder of Apamea, an ancient city now riddled with 15,000 looters' pits, and rebel groups besides ISIS have capitalized on the artifacts trade in areas they control. When ISIS showed up, it joined in the looting, Al-Azm says. "They exploited it, accelerated it, intensified it, but they did not start it."

Born in Lebanon to a Syrian father, the 51-year-old Al-Azm spent his youth visiting family in Damascus, and was part of a wave of young professionals who returned to Syria in the late '90s hoping for change under Bashar al-Assad. "It was great initially," he says, "but very quickly we realized it was a sham. After the father died and Bashar took over, the guise of reform went out the window." Al-Azm left Syria in 2006 for the United States; he now teaches at Shawnee State University in Ohio.

Al-Azm and the Monuments Men, many of them his former students, sprang into action nearly two years into the Syrian civil war, in late 2012, to protect a museum in the besieged northern city of Maarat that was home to an important collection of intact Roman and Byzantine-era mosaics. The solution they came up with was simple: sandbags. "The idea was to

*WHAT ARTIFACTS
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OF REVENUE.*

cover them up so that if extremists break into the museum one day, they would be buried," Al-Azm explains. So far, the mosaics have survived.

That was before ISIS surged into the war zone. The group encourages and even employs locals to steal and sell archaeological material in exchange for a fee. Called a *khums*, this levy is based on a Shariah provision requiring individuals to pay the state a percentage of the value of any treasure taken from the ground. Artifacts from the 14th- to 16th-century Islamic era and precious metals are taxed at higher rates or confiscated entirely to sell for profit. An Iraqi intelligence official told the *Guardian* that the sale of looted items just from the

al-Nabuk region earned ISIS \$36 million. "Next to oil, looting is the best-paying sector working for ISIS as a civilian," says Michael Danti of the State Department-funded Syrian Heritage Initiative.

The resulting damage has been staggering. Between March and November 2014, a once-intact Bronze Age site named Mari was pock-marked with more than 1,200 holes after coming under ISIS control. At a site near Raqqa, the capital of the Islamic State's so-called caliphate, bucket loaders and bulldozers were brought in to dig up artifacts. "You can see the cuts in the land," Al-Azm

says, looking at satellite images. "Just large-scale destruction."

After passing through various middlemen, looted objects are eventually bought by dealers who can afford to sit on them for years, until the heat dies down, and then fabricate their origins. "It's like wine—the longer you keep it, the more valuable it becomes," Al-Azm says. There are also stories of Syrian items being sold on eBay and rumors that they're being traded on darknet marketplaces similar to the now-shuttered Silk Road site.

Last September, Al-Azm wrote an open letter, signed by more than 250 academics, to the United Nations Security Council, declaring that looted objects have become "weapons of war...fueling the conflict." The UN banned the sale of Syrian antiquities in February. Secretary of State John Kerry has said that the Obama administration is "laser-focused" on protecting Syria's and Iraq's cultural heritage.

Unless international law enforcement agencies can curb the trade, the looting will continue, and the new Monuments Men will keep risking life and limb to show the world what's happening and, says Al-Azm, to save Syria's future. "If you destroy this cultural heritage, you destroy the only thing left that can help heal this country once the war is over." —**Bryan Schatz**

After you read our cover story, **PLEASE READ THIS.**

From the desk of:
Madeleine Buckingham
Publisher, *Mother Jones*

Mother Jones

Dear readers:

There's no issue today that better demonstrates the need for enterprising, investigative journalism than the gun violence plaguing our society. Measured in dollars or in human lives, the impact is profound, and yet public debate about guns in this country is maddeningly fact-free.

That's no accident. Thanks to the gun lobby, Congress has for years blocked funding for research on gun violence by the CDC's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. And harassment and stigmatization from gun advocates have left researchers fearful to touch the topic.

That's why *Mother Jones* stepped up to do this reporting: The need was urgent, and no one else would. Since 2012, we've been crunching data on mass shootings and gun violence, shining a light on the ways that dark money, the NRA, the gutting of mental-health care, and other factors have combined to create a public health crisis.

This kind of journalism isn't easy. This issue's special investigation into the hidden costs of gun violence took six months of reporting by three *Mother Jones* staffers, an outside researcher, and a big push from our data visualization team.

We can do this work because of the tax-deductible contributions from readers like you that make up more than half our budget. We're a reader-supported nonprofit, and without your fellow readers who chip in above the cost of subscribing, *Mother Jones* would not exist and this reporting wouldn't happen.

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Thanks for reading,

Madeleine Buckingham

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OR



QUIZ

NORTH KOREAN SLOGAN OR TED TALK?

North Korea recently released a list of 310 slogans, trying to rouse patriotic fervor for everything from bureaucracy (“Carry out the tasks given by the Party within the time it has set”) to edible fungi (“Let us turn ours into a country of mushrooms”). The slogans also urge North Koreans to embrace science and technology and adopt a spirit of can-do optimism—messages that might not be too out of place in a TED talk. Can you tell which of the following exhortations are propaganda from Pyongyang and which are sound bites from TED speakers? (Exclamation points have been added to all TED quotes to match North Korean house style.) —*Dave Gilson*

- 1 “Go beyond the cutting edge!”
- 2 “We are here for knowledge. Our enemy is thoughtlessness!”
- 3 “Do everything in an innovative and scientific way!”
- 4 “Democracy is a thing of value for which we should be fighting!”
- 5 “Music really is our daily medicine!”
- 6 “Develop and make effective use of wind, tidal, geothermal, and solar energy!”
- 7 “The more books we read, the earlier the country prospers; the less books we read, the later the country prospers.”
- 8 “Acquiring preemptive knowledge about emerging technologies is the best way to ensure that we have a say in the making of our future!”
- 9 “Let us build a fairyland for the people by dint of science!”
- 10 “The way to a more productive, more inspired, more joyful life is getting enough sleep!”
- 11 “Let us live not merely for today but for tomorrow!”
- 12 “Capitalism, at its most remorseless, is a physical manifestation of psychopathy!”

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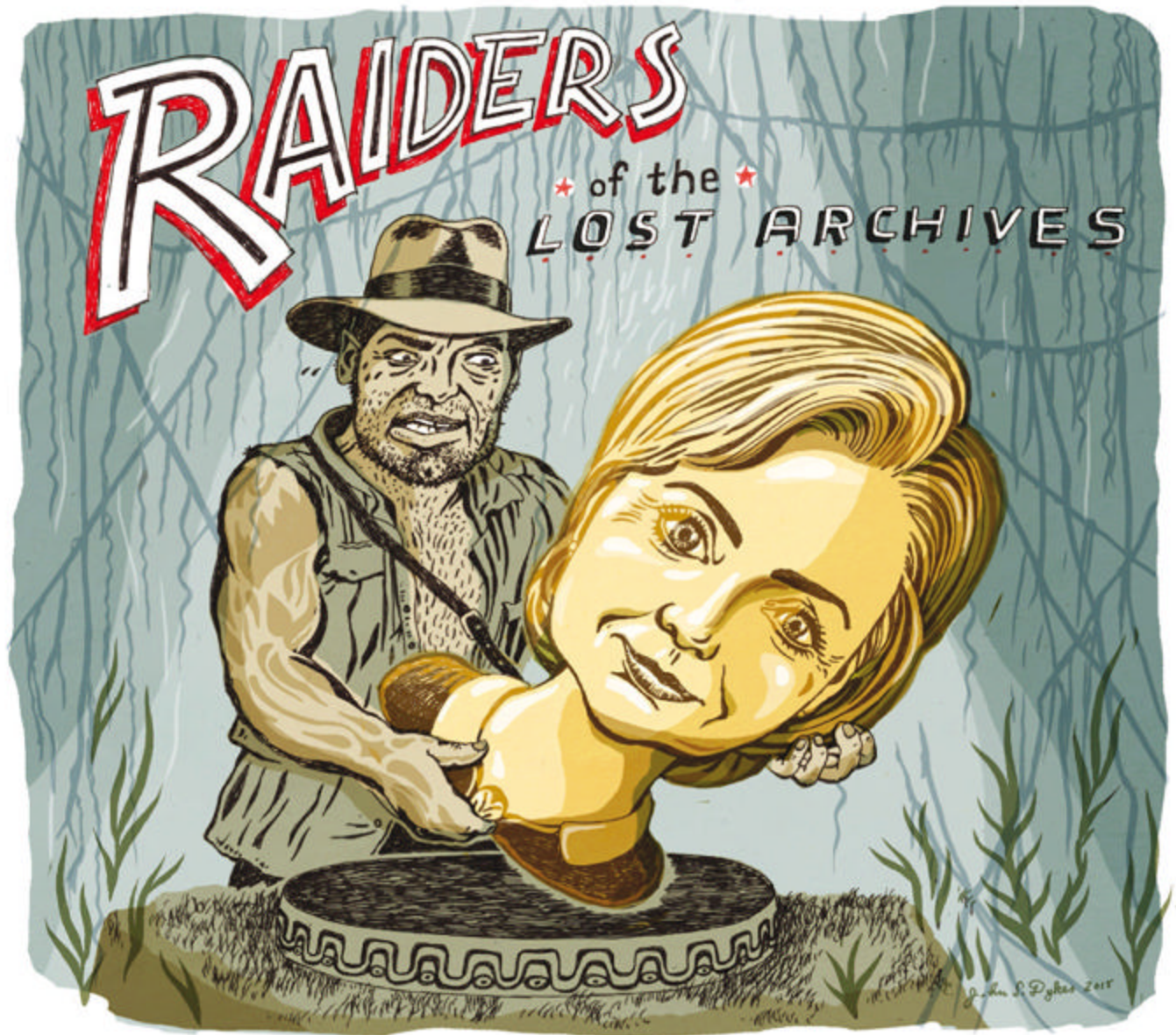
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HILLARY HUNTERS DESCEND ON LITTLE ROCK TO UNEARTH ANY REMAINING DIRT ON THE CLINTONS. **BY TIM MURPHY**

ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN S. DYKES

I met Larry Nichols, the self-described smut king of Arkansas, at a breakfast joint in Conway, not far from the spot where he claims Bill Clinton loyalists once fired on him and a reporter for London's *Sunday Telegraph*. "You have to understand," he said, looking up from his coffee, "you're in Redneck City." Nichols had declared war on the Clintons in 1988, when Bill was governor, after being canned from his job at a state agency for placing dozens of long-distance phone calls on behalf of the

Nicaraguan Contras. As he hunched over the table in four layers of winter clothing, Nichols indulged in the caginess that had once seduced a small army of conservative journalists seeking dirt on the Clintons—the lurching, twangy, conspiratorial tones of someone with a secret he wasn't sure how to spill. For a moment, I felt as if I'd taken the wrong exit off I-40 and ended up in 1995.

But Nichols, who did as much as anyone in Arkansas to paint an image of the 42nd president as a womanizing, cocaine-snorting, dirty-dealing, drug-running mafioso,

was ready to move on. "There is nothing you're gonna find here," he told me. "Pack your shit and go home. Good God, man—that was 20 years ago."

With Hillary Clinton the odds-on favorite in next year's Democratic presidential primary, all that was past is suddenly new again. The reinvestigation of the Clintons was already well underway by January, when Republican National Committee chairman Reince Priebus boasted to Bloomberg that he had dispatched a team of operatives to Little

Rock to investigate the former first lady and secretary of state. “We’re not going to be shy about what we are doing,” he said. “We’re going to be active. We’re going to get whatever we have to in order to share with the American people the truth about Hillary and Bill Clinton.” Last year, America Rising, an opposition research firm/political action group that works with Republican candidates, placed a full-time researcher in Little Rock, where she pored over newly declassified documents at the Clinton Presidential Library.

But 20 years after the so-called Arkansas Project, the multimillion-dollar campaign financed by conservative billionaire Richard Mellon Scaife that turned Whitewater and Troopergate into household names, opposition researchers face a conundrum: Considering that the first expedition for dirt on the Clintons culminated in impeachment proceedings, are there any stones left unturned in Little Rock?

Few pieces of political turf have been excavated as thoroughly as Arkansas was in the 1990s, when conservatives scoured the Ozarks for evidence of everything from plastic surgery (to fix Bill’s supposedly cocaine-ravaged nose) to murder (a list of suspicious deaths, promoted by Nichols, became known as “Arkancides”) and, of course, womanizing. In the state capital, the return of the oppo researchers has been met with a sigh. “Bill and Hillary left here in December of 1992 and never came back,” said Max Brantley, a longtime political columnist at the *Arkansas Times*. “Kenneth Starr ran everything through that grand jury. There may be something, but I can’t imagine what.” Rex Nelson, a former aide to Republican Gov. Mike Huckabee, told me there was nothing left to unearth about the Clintons, “unless there’s ancient relics buried in the dirt under the Rose Law Firm,” where Hillary was once a partner.

In their quest for fresh muck, the diggers have fixated on a new chamber of secrets: archives. With a 40-year record to pore over, oppo researchers and journalists have been gifted an almost unprecedented trove of papers from former Clinton associates, and tens of millions of pages from the couple’s years in Arkansas and Washington, DC, some of which have only recently been made public. “Every chief of staff, every top official for any Clinton office dating back 40 years has donated their pa-

pers to a university,” said Tim Miller, a co-founder of America Rising. “We’ve gone to other libraries where staffers from the Clinton White House, or Clinton governor’s office, have donated papers, or authors have written profiles on the Clintons.” (Shortly after I spoke with him, Miller took a job with Jeb Bush’s campaign. Throw in material related to Bush, a former governor and kin to two presidents, and next November’s race might feature the longest collective paper trail in history.)

Last year, the *Washington Free Beacon*, a conservative news outlet that wears its animus toward the Clintons as a badge of honor, hired an oppo researcher to help dig through special collections at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville. It came away with a series of journal excerpts from longtime Hillary confidante Diane Blair in which the first lady was quoted as calling Monica Lewinsky a “narcissistic loony toon.” The story made national news. “When those stories hit, we got busy for a week or so,” said Geoffrey Stark, the reading room supervisor at the university library’s special collections. The quiet basement room, with its oil paintings of homegrown artists and politicians looking on in judgment, filled up with reporters hungry for whatever scraps were left behind.

The Republican intelligence gathering has also spawned Democratic counterintelligence operations. Leaving nothing to chance, Correct the Record, a pro-Hillary group fronted by David Brock, the former right-wing journalist turned Clinton loyalist, dispatched a staffer to Fayetteville to scan the archives. Twenty-one years after he had blown open Troopergate, the bombshell that purported to detail how Bubba’s security detail facilitated his sexual liaisons, Brock was returning to Arkansas to put the genie back in the bottle. Correct the Record spokeswoman Adrienne Elrod confirmed that the group has been visiting the archives, but said, “We aren’t getting into the specifics of tactics or strategies.”

Yet even the field marshals of the new invasion recognize that the Clintons have moved on to bigger things. Miller expects the Arkansas cache to be used more as

supporting evidence rather than the main indictment. The Whitewater scandal of 2016 won’t be set in Arkansas; given Republicans’ fixation on the family’s international nonprofit, the Clinton Foundation, it might not even be in the United States. “For me, the big difference between 2016 and 2008, from a research standpoint, is that their network of influence has grown exponentially,” Miller explained. “When you’re talking about crony capitalism and special deals in the ’90s, a lot of times the beneficiaries are, like, Arkansas lawyers. Now their influences are the global elites.” And what’s *not* in the Clintons’ archives may turn out to be just as damaging, as

“PACK YOUR SHIT AND GO HOME.

GOOD GOD, MAN—

THAT WAS 20 YEARS AGO.”


Hillary found out in March, when it was revealed that she had skirted public recordkeeping requirements by conducting all of her State Department business with a private email address.

The Arkansas the Clintons left behind isn’t just old news—it hardly exists anymore. One morning in February, using the Whitewater report as my Lonely Planet guide, I spent a few hours walking through a Little Rock neighborhood known as SoMa, searching for remnants of the real estate deals that compelled special investigator Kenneth Starr to set up shop in town. In testimony, the area was described as “a slum district,” but it has since flowered into a yuppie paradise. I got a blank stare when I mentioned Whitewater at the farm-to-table café across the street from the former headquarters of Madison Guaranty Savings and Loan, the bank wrapped up in the Clintons’ scheme to turn a patch of land on the White River in the Ozarks into a summer resort. The young employee behind the counter seemed to think I was asking about whitewater rafting.

Now, in a salute to history, a subpoena-serving firm occupies the office that the state government once leased from the Clintons’ Whitewater banker pal. Next door at the Esse Purse [continued on page 63]



WHAT DOES GUN VIOLENCE



1: THE SURVIVORS // 2: BY THE NUMBERS // 3: THE UNSOLVED MURDERS

LENCE REALLY COST?

A SPECIAL INVESTIGATION BY MARK FOLLMAN, JULIA LURIE, AND JAEAH LEE,
BASED ON RESEARCH BY TED MILLER

It was a mild, crystal clear desert evening on November 15, 2004, when Jennifer Longdon and her fiancé, David Rueckert, closed up his martial-arts studio and headed out to grab some carnitas tortas from a nearby taqueria. They were joking and chatting about wedding plans—the local Japanese garden seemed perfect—as Rueckert turned their pickup into the parking lot of a strip mall in suburban north Phoenix. A red truck with oversize tires and tinted windows sideswiped theirs, and as they stopped to get out, Rueckert's window exploded. He told Longdon to get down and reached for the handgun he had inside a cooler on the cab floor. As he threw the truck into gear, there were two more shots. His words turned to gibberish and he slumped forward, his foot on the gas. A bullet hit Longdon's back like a bolt of lightning, her whole body a live wire as they accelerated toward the row of palm trees in the concrete divider.

The air bag against her was stifling, the inside of the cab hot. She managed to call 911. "Where are you shot on your body?" the dispatcher asked. "I don't know, I cannot move. I can't breathe anymore. Somebody help me," she pleaded. "I'm dying."

There was a rush of cool air, and a man leaning over her. Then a flood of bright lights. "Am I being medevacked?" she asked. "Those are news vultures," the EMT told her. He shielded her face with his hand as they rushed the gurney into the ambulance. "Tell my son I love him," she said.

Half of her ribs were shattered. Her lungs had collapsed and were filling with blood. As the ambulance screamed toward the hospital, Longdon, an avid scuba diver, clawed at the oxygen mask. She kept trying to tell them: "My regulator isn't working. My regulator isn't working." The EMT held her hand as she faded in and out.

She was barely hanging on as the ER doctor began to intubate her through her rib cage. "I'm really fast," he assured her, "and I'm going to do this as quickly as I can." As the nursing staff held her down,

Longdon heard a dog wailing in the corner of the room. How could they allow a dog into this sterile place and let it howl like that? "The last thing I remember was realizing that it wasn't a dog," she recalls. "It was me."

A couple of days into what would become her five-month hospital stay, Longdon was lying with her back to the door when a doctor came in. She didn't see his face when he calmly told her the news: She was a T-4 paraplegic, no longer able to move her body from the middle of her



chest down. Rueckert had also survived, but a bullet through his brain left him profoundly cognitively impaired and in need of permanent round-the-clock care.

Longdon didn't know it yet, but she was also facing financial ruin. Shortly after the shooting, her health insurance provider found a way to drop her coverage based on a preexisting condition. She would be hospitalized three more times in quick succession, twice for infections and once for a broken bone; all told, the bills would approach \$1 million in the first year alone. Longdon was

forced to file for personal bankruptcy—a stinging humiliation for someone who had earned about \$80,000 a year working in the software industry and building a massage therapy practice on the side.

"I'd never not paid a bill on time before that," Longdon told me as we looked across the mostly empty parking lot on an overcast afternoon in late February. Little had changed about the place except for the name on the Mexican restaurant. "I felt like a failure," she added, beginning the lengthy process of loading herself back

into her custom lift-equipped van. "Those doctors had given their all to save my life."

Over the past decade, Longdon has been hospitalized at least 20 times. One especially bad fall from her wheelchair in 2011 broke major bones in both legs. She came close to having them amputated and had to have titanium rods inserted. In 2013, she was admitted five times for sepsis, once after being defibrillated on her living room floor because the fever from the infection had caused her heart to stop. She has taken so many antibiotics that

Antonius Wiriadjaja

\$169,000
FOR MEDICAL
CARE,
PHYSICAL
THERAPY,
AND
COUNSELING



ON THE AFTERNOON OF

July 5, 2013, Antonius Wiriadjaja was walking in his Brooklyn neighborhood when a man stalking an ex-lover pulled out a gun and began shooting at her in broad daylight. A stray bullet pierced Wiriadjaja's chest and lodged in his stomach. A stranger rushed over to help, compressing Wiriadjaja's wound until the ambulance came. At the hospital, Wiriadjaja was put into a coma, beginning what would be a two-week stay. Then, "it took me seven months of physical therapy to regain most of my day-to-day functions, and about 18 months of psychiatric treatment to stave off

PTSD," he says. "I would never wish this amount of pain and misery on my worst enemy."

Part of Wiriadjaja's response was to blog about his recovery, including a series of photos displaying his scars. His medical and mental-health treatments have totaled about \$169,000, most of which have been covered by his health insurance. Still, his deductibles and other out-of-pocket expenses cost more than \$20,000 and ate up all his savings. For a while, he says, he had to couch-surf with friends "while my insides were still sloshing around." He was told that he was eligible for

reimbursements from the state's office of victim services, but the process was so daunting on top of his recovery and return to work—"like adding an extra full-time job"—that he decided to move on.

Today, Wiriadjaja is an assistant arts professor at New York University in Shanghai. "I know I'm lucky, because I had savings, health insurance, and an incredible support network," he says. "Many other gunshot survivors are not. I count my blessings every day." The man who helped save his life on the street was shot and killed in South Carolina last year.

of physical therapy, the trauma counseling, the in-home care, the wheelchairs, the customized van, her lost income—she let out a sharp laugh. "Please don't make me cry." She pondered the numbers for a long moment. "I don't know, maybe \$5 million?" She started the engine and used a lever next to the steering wheel to accelerate back toward the main road.

HOW MUCH DOES gun violence cost our country? It's a question we've been looking into at *Mother Jones* ever since the 2012 mass shooting at a movie theater in Aurora, Colorado, left 58 injured and 12 dead. How much care would the survivors and the victims' families need? What would be the effects on the broader community, and how far out would those costs ripple? As we've continued to investigate gun violence, one of our more startling discoveries is that nobody really knows.

Jennifer Longdon was one of at least 750,000 Americans injured by gunshots over the last decade, and she was lucky not to be one of the more than 320,000 killed. Each year more than 11,000 people are murdered with a firearm, and more than 20,000 others commit suicide using one. Hundreds of children die annually in gun homicides, and each week seems to bring news of another toddler accidentally shooting himself or a sibling with an unsecured gun. And perhaps most disturbingly, even as violent crime overall has declined steadily in recent years, rates of gun injury and death are climbing (up 11 and 4 percent since 2011) and mass shootings have been on the rise.

Yet, there is no definitive assessment of the costs for victims, their families, their employers, and the rest of us—including the major sums associated with criminal justice, long-term health care, and security and prevention. Our media is saturated with gun carnage practically 24/7. So why is the question of what we all pay for it barely part of the conversation?

Nobody, save perhaps for the hardcore gun lobby, doubts that gun violence is a serious problem. In an editorial in the April 7 issue of *Annals of Internal Medicine*, a team of doctors wrote: "It does not matter whether we believe that guns kill people or that people kill people with guns—the result is the same: a public health crisis."

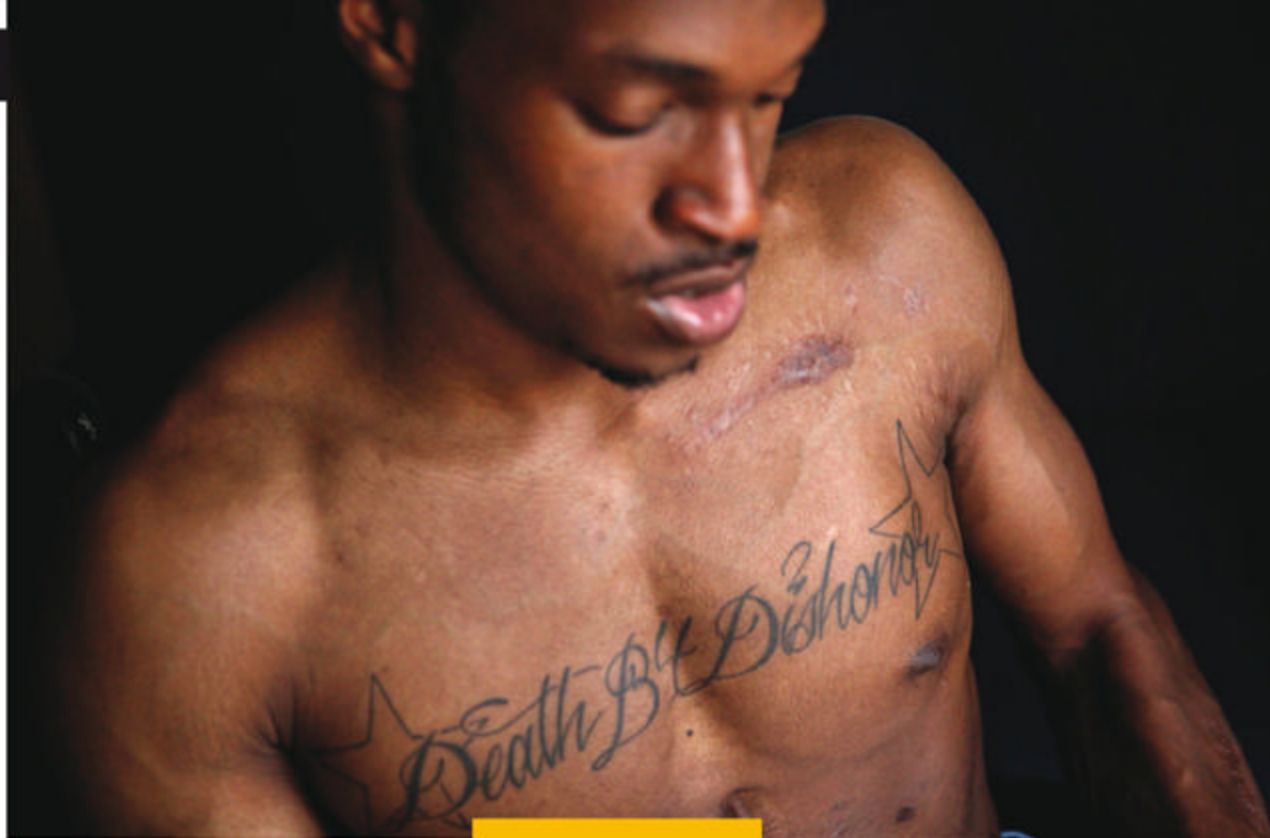
And solving a crisis, as any expert will

some no longer have any effect.

Most of Longdon's medical bills have been covered through a combination of Medicaid and Medicare. Her income since the shooting has been primarily from Social Security Disability Insurance, which pays her about \$2,000 a month. It has amounted to about a quarter million dol-

lars over the past 10 years, though that's barely been enough to keep her in her small house, which required extensive modifications just so she could wheel herself through the front door, take a shower, or make a bowl of ramen for dinner.

When I asked Longdon to try to add it all up—the hospital bills, the countless hours



Kamari Ridgle

**\$1.5
MILLION
FOR
MEDICAL
CARE,
INCLUDING
A \$25,000
MEDEVAC
RIDE**

tell you, begins with data. That's why the US government over the years has assessed the broad economic toll of a variety of major problems. Take motor vehicle crashes: Using statistical models to estimate a range of costs both tangible and more abstract—from property damage and traffic congestion to physical pain and lost quality of life—the Department of Transportation (DOT) published a 300-page study estimating the “total value of societal harm” from this problem in 2010 at \$871 billion. Similar research has been produced by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on the impact of air pollution, by the Department of Health and Human Services on the costs of domestic violence, and so on. But the government has mostly been mute on the economic toll of gun violence. HHS has assessed firearm-related hospitalizations, but its data is incomplete because some states don't require hospitals to track gunshot injuries among the larger pool of patients treated for open wounds. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has also periodically made estimates using hospital data, but based on narrow sample sizes and covering only the medical and lost-work costs of gun victims.

Why the lack of solid data? A prime reason is that the National Rifle Association and other influential gun rights advocates have long pressured political leaders

to shut down research related to firearms. The *Annals of Internal Medicine* editorial detailed this “suppression of science”:

“Two years ago, we called on physicians to focus on the public health threat of guns. The profession's relative silence was disturbing but in part explicable by our inability to study the problem. Political forc-

ON MAY 27, 2010, Kamari Ridgle had just left a liquor store in Richmond, California, when a car pulled up behind him and shots rang out. He was hit 22 times before the perpetrators sped off. Ridgle was 15 years old.

“When I was shot, I was that kid in and out of juvenile hall,” he says, describing his time as a drug dealer. “You develop a name, and people don't like you.” The gunshots shattered his elbow, mangled an arm, damaged his intestines and liver, and tore through his spine. He was transported by helicopter to a nearby hospital, where he underwent multiple emergency procedures. He would

have a dozen surgeries, including some later to remove bullets. It was nearly a year before he rolled out of the hospital with his wheelchair and a colostomy bag. Medicaid covered most of his costs.

Three men were tried for attempted murder in connection with the shooting. All three received long prison sentences.

Today, Ridgle is a full-time accounting and criminal-justice student at Sacramento City College. He notes he was quick to grasp the financial curriculum: It's not that the streets don't have good businessmen, he says, “it's that they all get killed.”

es had effectively banned the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other scientific agencies from funding research on gun-related injury and death. The ban worked: A recent systematic review of studies evaluating access to guns and its association with suicide and homicide identified no relevant [continued on page 30]

Guns kill **33,000**
Americans and injure
80,000 a year.

The total annual cost of gun
violence in the United States

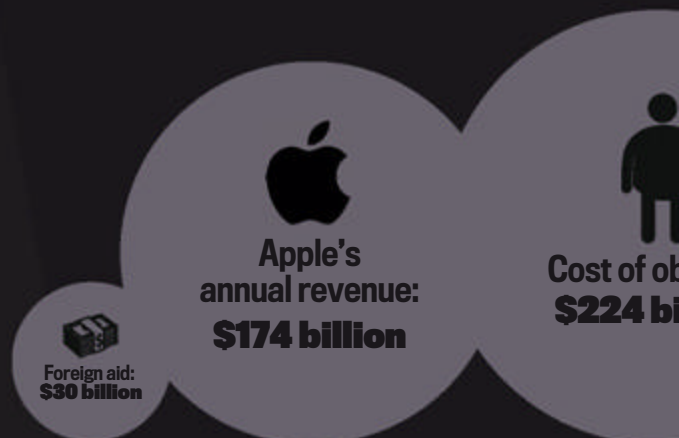
\$229 billion

■ Direct costs: \$8.6 billion ■ Indirect costs: \$221 billion

Gun violence costs more than it saves

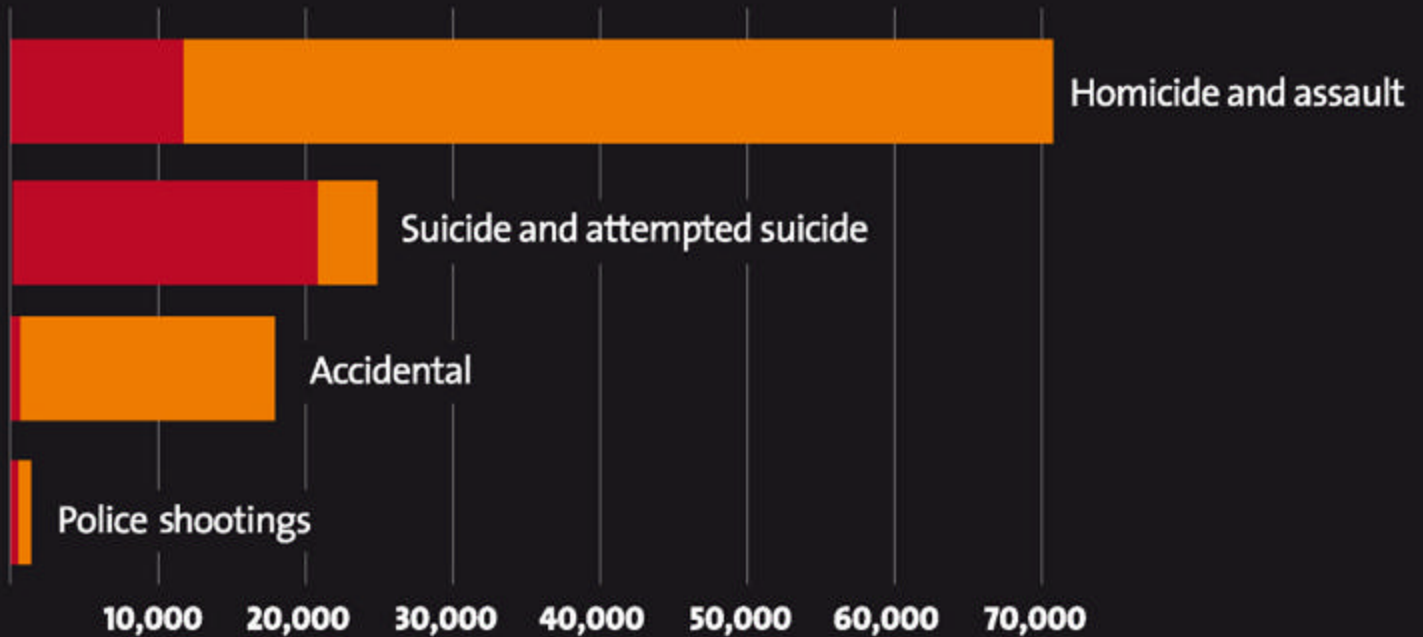
ABOUT THIS DATA

This article is the result of a joint investigation by *Mother Jones* and Ted Miller, a health economist at the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation. Based on Miller's work identifying and quantifying the societal impacts of gun violence, the annual price tag comes to more than \$229 billion a year (based on 2012 data). That includes \$8.6 billion in direct spending—from emergency care and other medical expenses to court and prison costs—as well as \$221 billion in less tangible “indirect” costs, which include impacts on productivity and quality of life for victims and their communities.



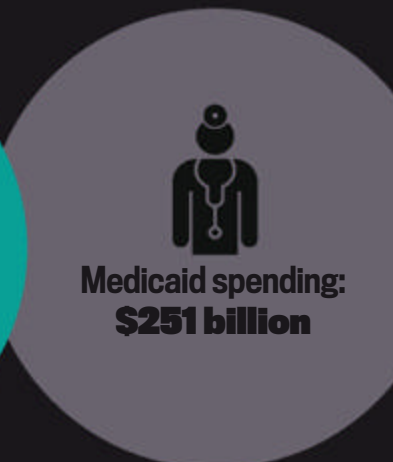
Gun casualties

Deaths Injuries



29 BILLION

Gun violence costs more than \$700 per American a year. We spend more on gun violence than on obesity, and almost as much as we spend on Medicaid.

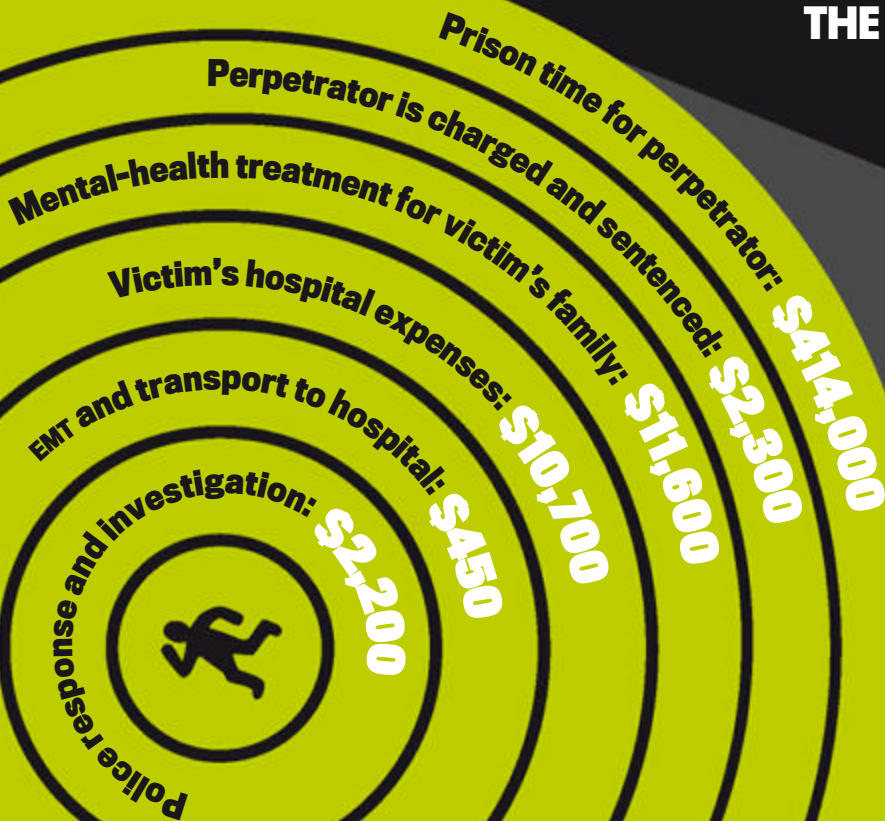


THE PRICE OF ONE MURDER

\$441,000

in direct costs.

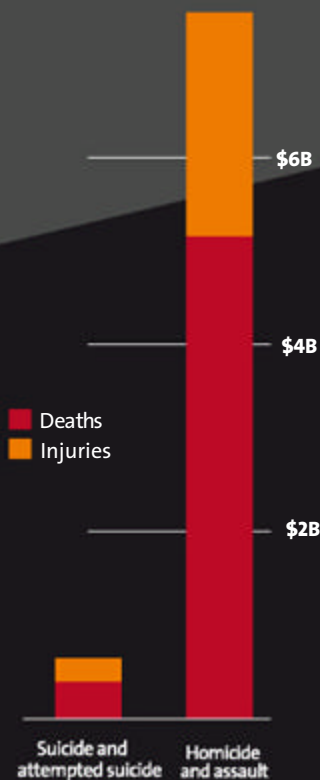
87% is paid by taxpayers, mostly for imprisoning perpetrators.



DIRECT COSTS PER VICTIM



TOTAL DIRECT COSTS



\$169 BILLION

LOST QUALITY OF LIFE:

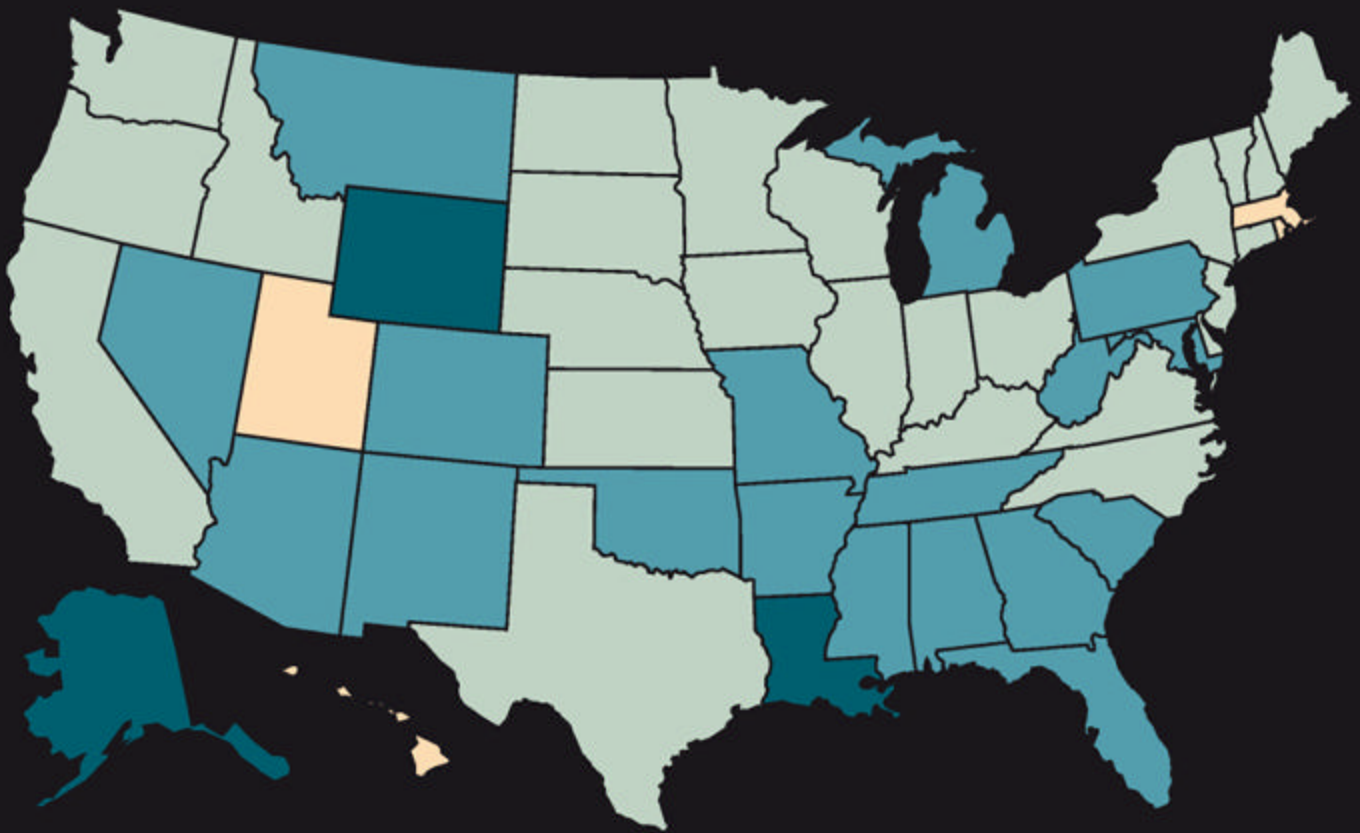
\$49 BILLION

DIRECT COSTS: \$8.6 BILLION

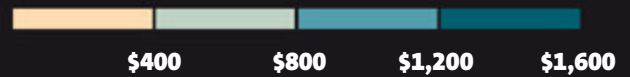
VICTIMS' LOST WAGES AND PRODUCTIVITY:

HOW IT ALL ADDS UP

\$8.6 billion in total **direct costs** is just the beginning. Add to that \$221 billion in **indirect costs**, primarily lost quality of life—based on the amounts awarded by juries in wrongful injury and death cases—and victims' lost wages and productivity. Miller assumes that the average American's life is worth about **\$6.2 MILLION**. That's a conservative estimate: The Environmental Protection Agency's current statistical value for a life is \$7.9 million; the Department of Transportation's is \$9.2 million.



Total cost of gun violence per capita



WYOMING

has the nation's highest rate of gun deaths despite its small population. It also has the highest costs per capita of any state, \$1,397.

HAWAII

has the lowest costs per capita for gun violence in the country (\$234), followed by Massachusetts. These two states also had the lowest gun death rates in 2012.

LOUISIANA

has the country's highest gun homicide rate, 9.4 per 100,000 residents. Nearly half the households in the state own a gun.

ILLINOIS

incurs \$750 in costs per person, in line with the national average. Its costs would be higher if more of Chicago's murders were solved; in 2012, only one-quarter were.

57%

of gun homicide victims are black.
Black men are **10 TIMES MORE LIKELY**
to be shot and killed than white men.

Black women are more than
3 TIMES MORE LIKELY to be shot
and killed than white women.

93%

of gun suicide victims are white.
White men are **3 TIMES MORE LIKELY**
to shoot and kill themselves than black men.

White women are more than
4 TIMES MORE LIKELY to shoot and
kill themselves than black women.



Guns are used in **70%** of homicides and more than **50%** of suicides in the United States.

More than
80%

of suicide attempts with a gun are successful.

Each gun death averages about **\$6 MILLION** in total costs.
Each gun injury requiring hospitalization costs about **\$583,000**.

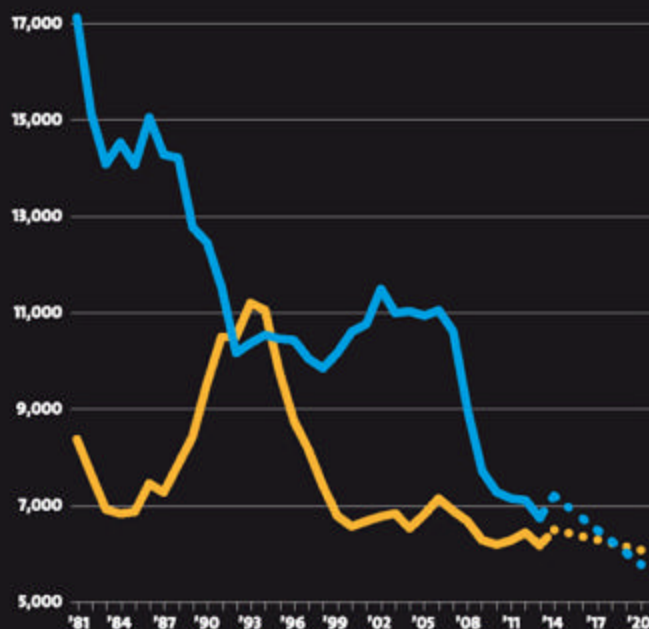


84% of gun homicide victims and **86%** of gun suicide victims are men.



For every gun homicide, there are **5 OTHER INJURIES** from assaults with guns.

Among 15- to 24-year-olds, **GUN DEATHS** are about to **SURPASS CAR ACCIDENTS** as the leading cause of death.



what does gun violence really cost?

[continued from page 23] studies published since 2005.”

An executive order in 2013 from President Obama sought to free up the CDC via a new budget, but the purse strings remain in the grip of Congress, many of whose members have seen their campaigns backed by six- and even seven-figure sums from the NRA. “Compounding the lack of research funding,” the doctors added, “is the fear among some researchers that studying guns will make them political targets and threaten their future funding even for unrelated topics.”

David Hemenway, director of the Harvard Injury Control Research Center, describes the chill this way: “There are so many big issues in the world, and the question is: Do you want to do gun research? Because you’re going to get attacked. No one is attacking us when we do heart disease.”

To begin to get a grasp on the economic toll, *Mother Jones* turned to Ted Miller at the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation, an independent nonprofit that studies public health, education, and safety issues. Miller has been one of the few researchers to delve deeply into guns, going back to the late 1980s when he began analyzing societal costs from violence, injury, and substance abuse, as well as the savings from prevention. Most of his 30-plus years of research has been funded by government grants and contracts; his work on guns in recent years has either been tucked into broader projects or done on the side. “I never take positions on legislation,” he notes. “Instead, I provide numbers to inform decision making.”

Miller’s approach looks at two categories of costs. The first is direct: Every time a bullet hits somebody, expenses can include emergency services, police investigations, and long-term medical and mental-health care, as well as court and prison costs. About 87 percent of these costs fall on taxpayers. The second category consists of indirect costs: Factors here include lost income, losses to employers, and impact on quality of life, which Miller bases on amounts that juries award for pain and suffering to victims of wrongful injury and death.

In collaboration with Miller, *Mother Jones* crunched data from 2012 and found that the annual cost of gun violence in America

Philip
Russo

\$83,000
IN LOST
HOUSEHOLD
INCOME

ON FEBRUARY 20, 2014, during a tribal council meeting in Alturas, California, a woman named Cherie Rhoades, angry about an eviction proceeding, walked in with two 9 mm handguns and opened fire. After one gun jammed and the other ran out of bullets, she pulled out a butcher’s knife and began stabbing people. Two people were critically injured and four died. Shelia Lynn Russo, a 47-year-old administrator, was among those shot and killed.

Philip Russo, her husband, was a part-time correctional officer at the local county jail. After Rhoades was taken there on the day of the shooting, Russo was told he could no longer guard the building—for Rhoades’ safety.

Not long after, Russo was laid off. Shelia had earned the majority of their household income, about \$60,000 annually. Russo lived off savings while he looked for a new job; he now works as a security guard at a medical center in Redding. “I waited my whole life to

meet someone like Shelia,” he says. “Then all too quickly she was gone.” He has become an advocate for tighter firearm regulations and for survivors of gun violence: “I knew that I wanted to get into victims advocacy because I so desperately needed it, and there seemed to be a great lack of it,” he says.

His wife’s suspected killer has pleaded not guilty to four counts of murder and two counts of attempted murder. The trial is expected to begin in 2016.

exceeds \$229 billion. Direct costs account for \$8.6 billion—including long-term prison costs for people who commit assault and homicide using guns, which at \$5.2 billion a year is the largest direct expense. Even before accounting for the more intangible

costs of the violence, in other words, the average cost to taxpayers for a single gun homicide in America is nearly \$400,000. And we pay for 32 of them every single day.

Indirect costs amount to at least \$221 billion, about \$169 billion of which

comes from what researchers consider to be the impact on victims' quality of life. Victims' lost wages, which account for \$49 billion annually, are the other major factor. Miller's calculation for indirect costs, based on jury awards, values the average "statistical life" harmed by gun violence at about \$6.2 million. That's toward the lower end of the range for this analytical method, which is used widely by industry and government. (The EPA, for example, currently values a statistical life at \$7.9 million, and the DOT uses \$9.2 million.)

Our investigation also begins to illu-

minate the economic toll for individual states. Louisiana has the highest gun homicide rate in the nation, with costs per capita of more than \$1,300. Wyoming has a small population but the highest overall rate of gun deaths—including the nation's highest suicide rate—with costs working out to about \$1,400 per resident. Among the four most populous states, the costs per capita in the gun rights strongholds of Florida and Texas outpace those in more strictly regulated California and New York. Hawaii and Massachusetts, with their relatively low gun ownership rates and tight

gun laws, have the lowest gun death rates, and costs per capita roughly a fifth as much as those of the states that pay the most.

AT \$229 BILLION, THE toll from gun violence would have been \$47 billion more than Apple's 2014 worldwide revenue and \$88 billion more than what the US government budgeted for education that year. Divvied up among every man, woman, and child in the United States, it would work out to more than \$700 per person.

But even the \$229 billion figure ultimately doesn't capture what gun violence

Pamela Bosley

\$23,500
IN MEDICAL
CARE AND
COUNSELING
FOR FAMILY



ON APRIL 4, 2006, in a neighborhood on Chicago's South Side, Pamela Bosley's 18-year-old son, Terrell, was unloading a drum set from a van in preparation for a church choir rehearsal when a man walked up and opened fire on him and his bandmates. Terrell was rushed by ambulance to a nearby hospital, where he died a few hours later. He was one of Chicago's 384 gun homicide victims that year.

Bosley describes Terrell, then a college freshman and the oldest of three siblings, as "my outgoing son." He was a starter on his high school football team, had performed as the lion in a school production of *The Wiz*, and played bass in jazz and gospel bands. He'd planned to major in music and tour the world.

The few hours when Terrell clung to life in the hospital cost about \$10,000, which was

mostly covered by the family's health insurance. Later, Bosley spent thousands of dollars out of pocket on therapy and antidepressants for herself and another family member, who was hospitalized at one point for depression. Bosley also lost several thousand dollars in earnings during a six-month leave of absence from her job as a bank teller. She twice attempted suicide. "I could be okay one hour,

then the next minute I could look at something and be broken down," she says. She regained some balance, but when she returned to her job, her coworkers' chatter about their kids, and her memories of Terrell visiting her at work, were too much to bear. She took a job at another bank.

In 2007, Bosley and her husband started a service to help gun violence survivors join support groups. Her

second son is planning to become a medical engineer, and Terrell's youngest brother—who was just eight at the time of Terrell's death and used to pray nightly that no one else in his family would get shot—is now a thriving high school junior. But justice has been elusive: In 2008, a man was charged in connection with Terrell's murder, but prosecutors lacked sufficient evidence, and no one has been convicted.

BJ Ayers

\$35,000
**IN STATE-
FUNDED
EMERGENCY
CARE**

ON DECEMBER 1, 2005, in Cheyenne, Wyoming, BJ Ayers' 19-year-old son, Brett, who had been struggling with depression, sat down in a chair, pointed a gun at his head, and pulled the trigger. He was rushed by ambulance to the hospital, where he passed away later that day. He had no health insurance. The emergency care costs, about \$35,000, were paid for by the hospital's state-backed "benevolent fund."

In the days following Brett's death, representatives of the Cheyenne Police Department's victim assistance program came to the house to remove the blood-soaked carpets and chair. They also

helped clean Brett's favorite cowboy hat, which he'd been wearing that day.

Four years later, his older brother Beau, 26, took his life with a gun, leaving behind a girlfriend and their one-year-old son. Beau had worked in construction for the state, and his salary of about \$37,000 had been the primary source of income for his young family.

Losing two of her three sons prompted Ayers to start a suicide prevention

organization called Grace for 2 Brothers, which holds support meetings for people who have lost loved ones to suicide. She is not interested in gun control, but says that when it comes to suicide prevention, "we have to talk about lethal means." The choice to commit suicide is often impulsive, and preventing access to guns can be crucial, she says. "In that instant, if someone has chosen to use a firearm, there's almost no chance that person will survive."



mand Action for Gun Sense not long after police killed a man who had been firing shots outside her son's high school. "These people have long-term problems—bowel issues, arthritis problems, chronic pain. They're on pain medication, and there are addiction issues. They keep returning to the hospital." In August 2014, a medical examiner concluded that former presidential aide James Brady's death in a nursing home at age 73 was due to complications from the bullet he took to his head during the attempt on Ronald Reagan's life almost 34 years earlier.

To gauge mental-health impact, Miller uses a study he coauthored back in 1998 that surveyed practitioners treating patients for trauma stemming from a broad range of violent crime. It calculated the rate of people who sought counseling, and the corresponding costs. Applying those numbers to current data on gun injuries and deaths gives an estimate of \$410 million annually in direct mental-health costs. But that sum would rise substantially if all gun victims and their families could afford to seek counseling. Miller hasn't had resources to build on the data since, and *Mother Jones* could find no other firearm-related mental-health studies by government or private institutions.

Then there are the costs that the available research doesn't capture at all. What about the trauma to entire communities, whether from mass shootings or chronic street violence? What about the steep societal cost of fear, which stunts economic development and provokes major spending on security and prevention? "This is what big-city mayors worry about," says Duke University economist Philip Cook, who coauthored a study 16 years ago that asked people how much they'd be willing to pay to reduce gun violence where they live. "How can Camden get out of the profound slump it's in? The first answer has to be, 'We've got to do something about the gun violence.'"

The fallout from mass shootings, which have been on the rise in recent years, includes outsize financial impact. Legal proceedings for the Aurora movie theater killer, for example, reached \$5.5 million before the trial even got underway this spring, including expenses related to the pool of 9,000 prospective jurors called for the case. Most Americans probably don't

costs us. For starters, there are gaps in what we know about long-term medical and disability expenses specifically from gunshots. Miller's research accounts for about seven years of long-term care for victims, and for lifelong care for those with spinal-cord or traumatic brain injuries. But Kelly Bernado, a former police officer who now works as an ER nurse near Seattle, points out that survivors' life spans and medical complications can exceed expectations. One of her patients was shot as a teen-

ager: "He was paralyzed from the neck down and could not feed himself, toilet himself, dress himself, or turn over in bed. He will live the rest of his life in a nursing home, all paid for by the taxpayers, as he is a Medicaid patient." She estimates that over the last two decades the price tag for this patient's skilled nursing care alone has been upwards of \$1.7 million. Even in less severe cases the consequences from gunshots can be profound, says Bernado, who joined the advocacy group Moms De-

even recall a less lethal rampage that took place just a few months after the Aurora tragedy, at the Clackamas Town Center near Portland, Oregon. When a gunman killed two people, wounded another, and took his own life at the shopping complex in December 2012, more than 150 officers from at least 13 local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies responded—an investigation that lasted more than three months and culminated in a report nearly 1,000 pages long. To calm the public, make repairs, and beef up security, the 1.5-million-square-foot mall shut down for three days during the height of the holiday shopping season, depriving 188 retail businesses of revenue.

Since the mass shooting at Columbine High School in 1999, the federal government has doled out at least \$811 million to help school districts hire security guards, including \$45 million since 20 first-graders and six adults were massacred at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut. That sum doesn't account for spending at the state and local level; according to the trade magazine *Campus Safety*, approximately 90 percent of American school systems have made security enhancements since Sandy Hook. Many have worked with law enforcement agencies to conduct active-shooter drills. Companies are marketing “bulletproof” backpacks and other defensive gear for children. A Massachusetts school recently tested an “active-shooter detection system” that costs as much as \$100,000 and uses technology also deployed in war zones. One research company recently projected that by 2017, school security systems will be a \$5-billion-a-year industry.

JENNIFER LONGDON KNOWS how culturally important guns are in Arizona, where almost anyone 18 and older can purchase firearms at any time, no questions asked. She grew up with guns and has shot them for sport over the years, including periodically since her injury—she favors the reliable heft of a .45-caliber Glock in her palm.

She also sometimes worries that she might turn one on herself. She staves off the feeling with a packed schedule and the occasional pour of añejo. But grief, PTSD, and perpetual neuropathic pain linger. So do the questions.

Had they been targeted? Was it a spon-

taneous act of road rage? Maybe a case of mistaken identity? The Phoenix police investigated, but never arrested anyone.

Sitting near her favorite waterfall at the Japanese garden where she and Rueckert once planned to get married, Longdon tells me how she eventually had to let go of the idea of justice. “People think all of these crimes make sense,” she says, “that all of them have some beginning, middle, and end. They don’t.”

Longdon, who is 55 and has long dark hair and a sly, charismatic smile, never lets

Some costs have hardly been studied at all—like the trauma and fear that stunt neighborhood development and prompt schools to deploy armed guards.

a conversation stay heavy for too long. Many days, she transports herself to meetings with advocacy groups, the mayor's office, or Arizona legislators, hammering away on guns and disabilities issues alike. So you'd better not refer to her as handicapped or wheelchair-bound—she's a woman and a wheeler. “I’m no saint,” she adds, “simply a deeply flawed loudmouth on a mission.”

Before her injury, fitness was essential to her life. She and Rueckert were black-belt martial artists and trained rigorously. Often they would begin their days by hiking to the top of Piestewa Peak, where they'd snack on fruit and watch the sun rise over the mountains around Phoenix.

Now, Longdon says, “my morning ritual is so consumed with just setting up this body for survival for the day.” It's a tax-

ing hour and a half: the careful process of checking her lower limbs and getting out of bed, the transfers to the toilet and then the shower chair—every day a formidable workout for the arms—and then the tedious process of “logrolling” into her clothes. “And that's before I even put on my makeup, get the coffee going, and start thinking about work,” she says.

Gun politics in Arizona are as rough as anywhere, and on the morning we head over to Phoenix City Hall, Longdon is going off about legislation just introduced by a state senator to legalize silencers and sawed-off shotguns. Longdon believes in universal background checks for gun buyers, a position national polls show is shared by most gun owners. But speaking out about the issue has drawn her vicious attacks from gun rights activists—she's been stalked, spat on in public, and harassed with rape and death threats.

Nobody who knows Longdon expects any of that to get in her way—certainly not the mayor's chief of staff, Reuben Alonzo, who worked closely with her on a program in 2013 that took 2,000 unwanted firearms off the streets, the largest buyback in the state's history. Longdon was one of the first people the mayor turned to for advice on gun policy, Alonzo says, noting that it wasn't just a matter of her personal story. “There's a stereotype about advocates like Jennifer,” he says, “but her approach is really quite pragmatic. She has the knowledge to back it up.”

Longdon is well aware that 2,000 unwanted guns melted down by the Phoenix PD is a tiny fraction of the firepower out there. But the cost of gun violence works out to more than \$800 a year each for Arizona's 6.7 million residents, and if she can start to chip away at that by keeping guns out of the wrong hands, it's worth it to her. “Not one of those guns will ever be used in a suicide, an accidental discharge, or a crime,” she says, “and that is significant.”

And maybe it will help save someone from having to pay what she has. “There's nothing I wouldn't give to go back to where life was before. On long nights, when I'm alone and my pain level is high, and maybe something has triggered the memories, I have to be really careful not to let that melancholy and grief overwhelm me,” she says. “It's an ongoing battle every day—choosing to stay alive, and to continue to fight.” ■

Black Deaths Matter

Why is it so hard for families of color to get justice when a loved one is murdered?

BY EDWIN RIOS
WITH KAI WRIGHT

PHOTOGRAPHS
BY JUSTIN MAXON





Photographer Justin Maxon has spent years documenting unsolved murders in Chester, Pennsylvania; for this project, he photographed the families of homicide victims as well as the sites where their loved ones were shot. Shanell Brightwell (with her sons, Jabrae and Jabree) lost her father, Gary Brightwell, in 1998. He was shot next to Pump No. 5 at the Sunoco station on Ninth and Kerlin.

ON THE MORNING

of March 11, 2008, shortly after the bus picked up his twin brothers for preschool, Emill Smith stopped by the house of his mother, Valerie Maxwell, in Chester, Pennsylvania. At 22, he was stocky and athletic, with dark eyes, faint facial hair, and a cursive tattoo on his right hand: "R.I.P. James," in memory of his father, who died in his sleep when Emill was 12. They talked for a while, and he asked if he could pick the twins up from school that afternoon so they could spend time together.

That afternoon, Emill took the four-year-olds to McDonald's and his place before dropping them off at Valerie's: "They almost set the apartment on fire," he joked. "Here, you can have them." As he walked out, he stopped.

"Mom."

"Yes?"

"I love you."

"I love you more."

At 7:15 p.m. that night, Valerie dialed Emill's number to make sure he was home in time for his 7:30 curfew, part of his probation for disorderly conduct in a domestic dispute. No answer. A few minutes later, one of Emill's friends rushed in and collapsed.

"I just put my hands over my ears," she recalls, tears dripping down her cheek. "I felt it. I felt it. I felt it for a long time."

Emill had been to a neighborhood bar, where a security camera recorded him dancing, hanging out by the pool table, and kissing an old friend on the forehead before leaving. As he got into his car, someone walked up and shot him several times. No one was ever arrested in connection with the crime, and odds are no one will be. That's because, while Chester has one of the nation's highest homicide rates, it has a far lower than average "clearance rate." Not even one-third of last year's 30 homicides have been solved, a rate less than half the national average. Since 2005, 144 killings have gone unsolved.

FOR GENERATIONS, BLACK frustration with policing has been best described in a two-part statement: Cops don't care enough to solve crimes in our neighborhoods—they just come and harass our kids. Novelist Walter Mosley even built a best-selling detective series around a tough private investigator who does all the serving and protecting that cops won't do on the black side of town.





Top: Valerie Maxwell's son Emill Smith was shot to death in 2008 after spending the afternoon playing with his little brothers.

Bottom left: Tareeah Garrett and her son, Asir Hudson, mourn her boyfriend, MacMatherson Miller, who

was killed in 2008. He'd just started walking again after being shot 10 times a few months before.

Bottom right: Elena Jo McElwee lost her twin brother, Arthur, in 2012 when he was shot while walking down an alley with friends.

The bitter irony is that it was this same complaint that helped spawn the aggressive policing tactics now under attack from Ferguson to New York City. In the 1980s, when crack and heroin syndicates swept through black neighborhoods, black parents and pastors were some of the first and loudest voices to demand a war on drugs. What they got was "broken windows" policing—an emphasis on curbing petty offenses to prevent more serious crime.

What they also got were mandatory minimum sentences for shoplifters, indiscriminate stop-and-frisk sweeps, and deadly choke holds on men selling loose cigarettes. There's little evidence that these tactics contributed much to the national decline in crime. But they did erode trust in law enforcement across many communities—leaving places like Chester increasingly bereft of the protection they badly need. With residents both fearful of police and worried about being targeted for talking to them, detectives can't find the witnesses they need to solve crimes, breeding further distrust and a vicious cycle of frustration. A 2014 *New York Daily News* investigation found that in 2013, police solved about 86 percent of homicides in which the victim was white. For black victims, the number was just 45 percent. And in high-minority communities like Chester, says David Kennedy, a professor at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, clearance rates for murder—and even more so for nonfatal shootings—can get "pathetically low. They can easily fall down to single digits."



FOUNDED AS THE settlement of Upland in 1644, Chester once thrived on industry—its shipyard supplied Union soldiers, its steel mills sustained residents through both world wars, and factories, including a Ford plant, offered good jobs for black and white residents through



the 1950s. Residents flocked to movie theaters and nightclubs, and legends like Wilt Chamberlain and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar played streetball at “The Cage.”

But in the 1960s and ’70s, companies left Chester for other parts of the county, and the city starved for jobs and tax revenue. Toxic-waste processing plants were among the few businesses moving in as middle-class families headed to the suburbs, leaving the city with nearly half its postwar population. And in the ’80s, Chester, like nearby Philadelphia, became a hotbed for organized crime and drug trafficking.

Today, smoke still drifts from the stacks

of the Kimberly-Clark plant on the Delaware River, where workers make Scott tissue and paper towels. Up the hill are clusters of well-kept redbrick houses around Crozer Medical Center, the city’s largest employer. Across Chester Creek are boarded-up homes and the city’s Ruth L. Bennett and William Penn housing projects. Some 75 percent of Chester’s residents are African American, a third live below the federal poverty line, and unemployment is at 7.5 percent, nearly 2 points higher than the national average. In 2013, the homicide rate here was more than four times that of Philadelphia and Chicago. And in a city of

a little more than 34,000, each death sends ripples throughout the community.

There are at least 120 churches in Chester, including the Temple of Brotherly Love, presided over by the Reverend Calvin Williams. Williams lost a son and a nephew to gun violence, and over the last decade, he and his wife, Patricia, have been visiting crime scenes as often as possible, offering prayer and reflection behind the yellow caution tape. “When brothers and sisters can’t get jobs, or this little guy is trying to take care of his mother, he’s going to find a way,” Williams says. “So it becomes territorial. He’s trying to make a living, so



Left: Tisheta Green's son Terrance Webster was two years old when he was killed by a bullet as his father carried him into their home.

Top: Robert and Sherrice Alexander-Hill's son Karim was shot in 2008 while talking to a friend on the street. Each year, Sherrice (pictured with her grandson Karim and her

children Tara Watts, Ayla Muhammad, and Sharifah Muhammad), puts together a block party in his memory.

Bottom: Tyrone King, Hammenah Rollie, and Amin Rollie remember their mother, Linda Rose Brown. Her body was found, strangled and shot, in an abandoned house in 1998.

he's going to do whatever's he's gotta do."

When Williams heard that Emill Smith, whom he knew from volunteering at Chester High School, had been killed, he headed to his mother's house immediately. When she opened the door, Williams held her tight and said nothing. "He let me cry," Valerie says. "Calvin knew, he just knew how I felt about my children. My children mean everything to me."

Just five months after Valerie buried Emill, police found her aunt Sherrice Alexander-Hill's son Karim Alexander dead in the street behind her home—the first of what would be six homicides that

week. Some of the killings seemed to involve retaliatory violence between warring neighborhood crews, according to local news reports. But that's conjecture, because cops haven't solved Karim's murder either.

WHAT DETERMINES the likelihood of a murder case being solved? One factor appears to be police response in the hours and days after a killing: According to a study published in the *National Institute of Justice Journal*, the faster officers secure the scene, notify homicide detectives, and ID witnesses, the more likely it is the killer will

be brought to justice.

But that can be hard in a place like Chester, says Cory Long, a community leader who worked on the city's anti-violence task force, because the relationship between police and community is so strained that residents are often reluctant to come forward. Witnesses not only fear police won't protect them from retaliation, they simply don't believe law enforcement will help them find justice.

"Some of these issues have been going on with the same neighborhoods," Long says. "You know, generations under them. One guy gets locked up. [continued on page 62]



ATTACK OF **KILLER**

They swallow forests whole and send politicians into a frenzy. But do the bugs know something we don't?

There is an eerie feel to this grove of lodgepole pines that I can't quite put my finger on as entomologist Diana Six tromps ahead of me, hatchet in hand, scanning the southwestern Montana woods for her target. But as she digs the blade into a towering trunk, it finally hits me: the smell. There's no scent of pine needles, no sharp, minty note wafting through the brisk fall air.

Six hacks away hunks of bark until she reveals an inner layer riddled with wormy passageways. "Hey, looky!" she exclaims, poking at a small black form. "Are you dead? Yeah, you're dead." She extends her hand, holding a tiny oval, maybe a quarter of an inch long. Scientists often compare this insect to a grain of rice, but Six prefers mouse dropping: "Beetle in one hand, mouse turd in another. You can't tell them apart." She turns to the next few trees in search of more traces. Pill-size holes pock their ashen trunks—



THE

BY MADDIE OATMAN ILLUSTRATION BY BILL MAYER

BEETLES

a sign, along with the missing pine scent, of a forest reeling from an invasion.

These tiny winged beetles have long been culling sickly trees in North American forests. But in recent years, they've been working overtime. Prolonged droughts and shorter winters have spurred bark beetles to kill billions of trees in what's likely the largest forest insect outbreak ever recorded, about 10 times the size of past eruptions. "A doubling would have been remarkable," Six says. "Ten times screams that something is really going wrong."

Mountain pine, spruce, piñon ips, and other kinds of bark beetles have chomped 46 million of the country's 850 million acres of forested land, from the Yukon down the spine of the Rocky Mountains all the way to Mexico. Yellowstone's grizzly bears have run out of pinecones to eat because of the beetles. Skiers and backpackers have watched their brushy green playgrounds fade as trees fall down, sometimes at a rate of 100,000 trunks a day. Real estate agents have seen home prices plummet from "viewshed contamination" in areas ransacked by the bugs.

And the devastation isn't likely to let up anytime soon. As climate change warms the North American woods, we can expect these bugs to continue to proliferate and thrive in higher elevations—meaning more beetles in the coming century, preying on bigger chunks of the country.

In hopes of staving off complete catastrophe, the United States Forest Service, which oversees 80 percent of the country's woodlands, has launched a beetle offensive, chopping down trees to prevent future infestations. The USFS believes this strategy reduces trees' competition for resources, allowing the few that remain to better resist invading bugs. This theory just so happens to also benefit loggers, who are more than willing to help thin the forests. Politicians, too, have jumped on board, often on behalf of the timber industry: More than 50 bills introduced since 2001 in Congress proposed increasing timber harvests in part to help deal with beetle outbreaks.

But Six believes that the blitz on the bugs could backfire in a big way. For starters, she says, cutting trees "quite often removes more trees than the beetles would"—effectively

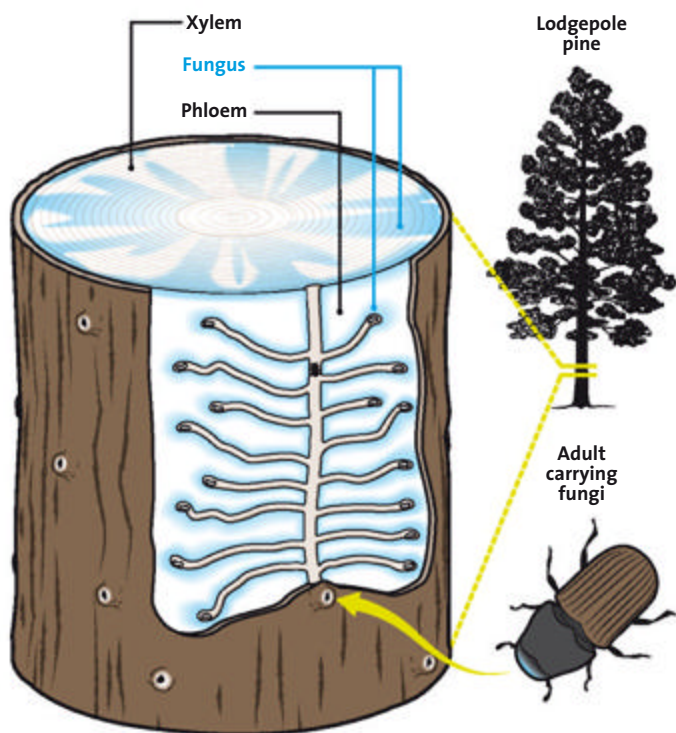
outbeetling the beetles. But more importantly, intriguing evidence suggests that the bugs might be on the forest's side. Six and other scientists are beginning to wonder: What if the insects that have wrought this devastation actually know more than we do about adapting to a changing climate?

Though they're often described as pesky invaders, bark beetles have been a key part of conifer ecosystems for ages, ensuring that groves don't get overcrowded. When a female mountain pine beetle locates a frail tree, she emits a chemical signal to her friends, who swarm to her by the hundreds. Together they chew through the bark until they reach the phloem, a cushy resinous layer between the outer bark and the sapwood that carries sugars through the tree. There, they lay their eggs in tunnels, and eventually a new generation of beetles hatches, grows up, and flies away. But before they do, the mature beetles also spread a special fungus in the center of the trunk. And that's where things get really interesting.

Six focuses on the "evolutionary marriage" of beetle and fungi at her four-per-

A BUG'S LIFE

An adult mountain pine beetle lays her eggs under the bark. On her way, she disperses fungi that turn the tree's tissue into food for her babies, eventually killing the tree.

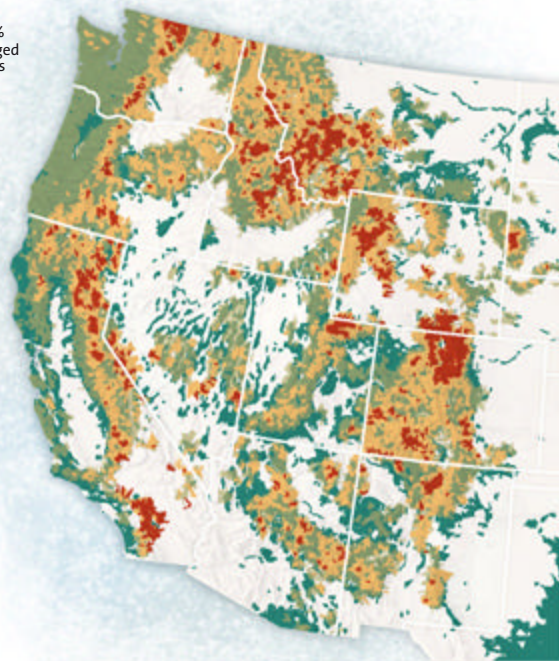


BEETLEMANIA

From 2000 to 2014, bark beetles destroyed large swaths of forest in the American West—and they're not done yet.

Percentage of trees seen with damage

- 1%-10%
- 11%-50%
- 51%-100%
- undamaged tree areas



Source: US Forest Service

Beetles are chewing their way through American forests, sometimes felling as many as 100,000 trees a day.

son lab at the University of Montana, where she is the chair of the department of ecosystems and conservation sciences. Structures in bark beetles' mouths have evolved to carry certain types of fungi that convert the tree's tissue into nutrients for the bug. The fungi have "figured out how to hail the beetle that will get them to the center of the tree," Six says. "It's like getting a taxi." The fungi leave blue-gray streaks in the trees they kill; "blue-stain pine" has become a specialty product, used to make everything from cabins to coffins to iPod cases.

A healthy tree can usually beat back invading beetles by deploying chemical defenses and flooding them out with sticky resin. But just as dehydration makes humans weaker, heat and drought impede a tree's ability to fight back—less water means less resin. In some areas of the Rocky Mountain West, the mid-2000s was the driest, hottest stretch in 800 years. From 2000 to 2012, bark beetles killed enough trees to cover the entire state of Colorado. "Insects reflect their environment," explains renowned entomologist Ken Raffa—they serve as a barometer of vast changes taking place in an ecosystem.

Typically, beetle swells subside when they either run out of trees or when long, cold winters freeze them off (though some larvae typically survive, since they produce antifreeze that can keep them safe down to 30 below). But in warm weather the bugs thrive. In 2008, a team of biologists at the University of Colorado observed pine beetles flying and attacking trees in June, a month earlier than previously recorded. With warmer springs, the beetle flight season had doubled, meaning they could mature and lay eggs—and then their babies could mature and lay eggs—all within one summer.

That's not the only big change. Even as the mountain pine beetles run out of lodgepole pines to devour in the United States, in 2011 the insects made their first jump into a new species of tree, the jack

pine, in Alberta. "Those trees don't have evolved defenses," Six says, "and they're not fighting back." The ability to invade a new species means the insects could begin a trek east across Canada's boreal forest, then head south into the jack, red, and white pines of Minnesota and the Great Lakes region, and on to the woods of the East Coast. Similarly, last year, the reddish-black spruce beetle infested five times as many acres in Colorado as it did in 2009. And in the last decade, scientists spotted the southern pine beetle north of the Mason-Dixon Line for the first time on record, in New Jersey and later on Long Island. As investigative journalist Andrew Nikiforuk put it in his 2011 book on the outbreaks, we now belong to the "empire of the beetle."

In a weird way, all of this is exciting news for Six: She is not only one of the world's foremost experts in beetle-fungi symbiosis, but proud to be "one of the few people in Montana that thinks bark beetles are cute." (She's even brewed her own beer from beetle fungi.) As a child, she filled her bedroom in Upland, California, with jars of insects and her fungus collection. But as a teenager, she got into drugs, quit high school, and started living on the streets. Nine years later, she attended night school, where teachers urged her to become the first in her family to go to college. And when she finally did, she couldn't get enough: classes in microbiology and integrated pest management led to a master's degree in veterinary entomology, then a Ph.D. in entomology and mycology and a postdoc in chemical ecology, focused on insect pheromones.

Six, 58, has light-green eyes ringed with saffron, and long silvery-blond hair streaming down shoulders toned from fly-fishing and bodybuilding. As several fellow researchers stress to me, she is the rare



Entomologist Diana Six, who has devoted her career to bark beetles, believes that the bugs might hold clues to saving our forests in the face of climate change.

scientist who's also a powerful communicator. "I think about what it means to be a tree," she told a rapt audience at a TEDx talk about global forest die-offs. "Trees can't walk. Trees can't run. Trees can't hide," she continued, her sonorous voice pausing carefully for emphasis. "And that means, when an enemy like the mountain pine beetle shows up, they have no choice but to stand their ground."

To a tree hugger, that might seem a grim prognosis: Since trees can't escape, they'll all eventually be devoured by insects, until we have no forests left. Especially since, with our current climate projections, we might be headed toward a world in which beetle blooms do not subside easily and instead continue to spread through new terrain.

But Six has a different way of looking at the trees' plight: as a battle for survival, with the army of beetles as a helper. She found compelling evidence of this after stumbling across the work of Forest Service researcher Constance Millar, with whom she had crossed paths at beetle conferences.

Millar was comparing tree core measurements of limber [continued on page 64]

Hung out to Dry

**A dodgy clinic.
A reality TV crew.
AWOL state regulators.
How a twentysomething
alcoholic's last
best hope took
a fatal turn.**

BY JOHN HILL

ILLUSTRATION BY MAX O-MATIC

On December 30, 2012, as part of a series called *Drugged*, the National Geographic Channel aired an hourlong documentary about a 28-year-old named Ryan Rogers. It appeared to be a classic tale of a drunk trying against the odds to sober up, albeit with especially harrowing footage and an unusually charismatic protagonist, often shown with a radiant smile on his handsome face. In one scene, Ryan, in the midst of another day of drinking vodka straight out of the bottle, vomits into the trash can next to his armchair as his distraught grandfather looks on. In another, he roils around the passenger seat while badgering the elderly man to drive him to the liquor store.

"I apologize, you guys," Ryan says to the camera crew in the backseat. Without a drink, "I can't even focus or think or even understand anything."

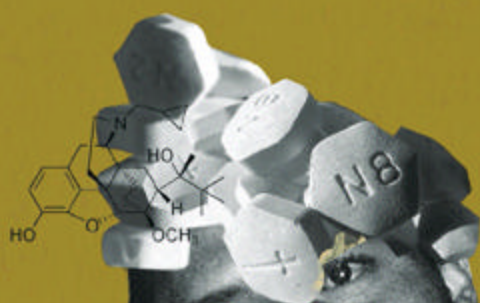
These scenes of craving and self-ruin unfold along the idyllic shores of Ryan's home near Lake Tahoe, with a cheerful, late-spring alpine light dancing in the pines. During the rare moments of relative calm, Ryan's warmth and a loving, if fraught, relationship with his family reveal someone who might have a shot at kicking addiction.

This episode of *Drugged* focused on the medical

consequences of alcoholism, so the British production company, Pioneer Productions, followed Ryan until he entered a recovery program, which the company arranged in exchange for his willingness to lay bare his inner turmoil. Ryan's first stop was a Texas medical clinic, where he underwent a comprehensive evaluation. After palpating his pancreas and liver, the doctor told Ryan that parts of his body were "screaming and dying" as a result of all the alcohol. The hip he broke when he fell off his bike, drunk, while pedaling to the liquor store never healed, leaving him with a rolling limp and in constant pain. At one point Ryan had permission from a psychiatrist to alleviate his withdrawal with some vodka, which he knocked back with an orange soda chaser in the men's room. Then came the pivotal moment, a staple of addiction reality shows: the interview when the psychiatrist asked if he was willing to go into rehab.

Ryan said he was terrified, but vowed, "I want to amaze people, to let them know: I was gone, but here I am."

The next day, Ryan arrived at Bay Recovery, a luxurious San Diego center where treatment ran about \$1,800 a day. In a baggy white T-shirt, sagging jeans,



and a blue bandanna, he carried his navy-blue duffel bag from a taxi to the front door of his new residence, one of several Bay Recovery houses in a neighborhood overlooking Mission Bay and SeaWorld. His room was in a tree-shaded four-bedroom house, set back from the road.

Ryan looked at the ocean and the verdant lawn. “I might not want to leave,” he said. The frame froze on his smiling face.

“Ryan took a courageous step,” the narrator intoned. “But 17 days into rehab, he died. He was only 28 years old.”

But things weren’t quite that simple. A look at the government records surrounding Ryan’s case—and the rest of the poorly regulated rehab industry—suggests that it might not have been just the drinking that killed him: It was the treatment, as well.

The documentary touched a chord with viewers. “I’m sitting here just fucking devastated,” one wrote on Reddit after the film was posted on the site. “Good God, that was absolutely crushing,” another wrote. “I was rooting so hard for him.”

Ryan’s story is a very specific tale of addiction and loss. But it’s also a case study of the fragmented, expensive, and poorly regulated rehab system. Desperate families struggle to find affordable treatment. Those who do all too often discover facilities subject to minimal standards, with regulators who do little to track what happens to patients or to assure that programs are following evidence-based best practices.

At the time of Ryan’s death, California’s medical board had opened the latest of four cases against Bay Recovery’s executive director, Dr. Jerry Rand. Among the concerns that they cited was the death of another patient several years before. And yet the center had been allowed to stay in business, leaving Rand responsible for Ryan and scores of other vulnerable addicts.

Of America’s estimated 18.7 million alcoholics, only 1.7 million—8.8 percent—are treated in specialized facilities, according to a 2012 report by Columbia’s National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse. That five-year study reviewed more than 7,000 publications, analyzed five national datasets, conducted focus groups and surveys of addicts and treatment professionals, and investigated how rehab centers are licensed. Its conclusion: “Despite the prevalence of these conditions, the enormity of the conse-

quences that result from them, and the availability of effective solutions, screening and early intervention for risky substance use is rare, and the vast majority of people in need of treatment do not receive anything that approximates evidence-based care.” Nine out of 10 people with alcohol or drug addiction, it said, get no treatment at all.

Compounding the problem is the fact that treatment is often not covered by insurance, but paid out of pocket by addicts and families. Traditionally, private insurance has covered 54 percent of Americans’ health care costs, but only 15 percent of alcohol addiction treatment. Obamacare—which requires many government-subsidized health plans to cover treatment—stands to improve matters, but quality of care remains a serious problem. While residential treatment programs must be licensed at the state level, standards vary widely. “For no other health condition

A major study of the rehab industry found that in many states, clinics are barely regulated and offer “unproven therapies” at “astronomical prices.”

are such exemptions from routine governmental oversight considered acceptable practice,” the Columbia report concluded.

A great deal of research supports modern evidence-based approaches to addiction, often involving medically supervised withdrawal, medication to help with withdrawal symptoms, support groups, and cognitive behavioral therapy. But because there are no national standards, the Columbia study notes, “patients face a patchwork of treatment programs with vastly different approaches; many offer unproven therapies and little medical supervision,” even at centers pushing “posh residential treatment at astronomical prices.”

Part of the problem is that alcohol and drug abuse have been seen less as medical conditions than moral failings requiring self-discipline, according to Scott Walters, a

University of North Texas psychologist who has studied addiction treatment. The model popularized by Alcoholics Anonymous, though effective in many cases, is not based on modern science or medical research. One result are clinics staffed by “counselors” who in many states are required to have only minimal training in responding to the serious medical problems that addicts like Ryan often face.

“There’s really no quality control,” Dr. Mark Willenbring, a former director of treatment and recovery research at the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, told me. “The consumer is hard-pressed to know what’s what.”

Ryan’s mother, Genene Thomas, and his father, Tim, met when she was 16, he was 18, and they were both working at restaurants in the casinos that line the southern shore of Lake Tahoe. When she was 20, they married, and went on to have four sons.

Now 51, long divorced and remarried, Genene welcomed me into the living room of her cozy ranch house, filled with Western memorabilia and sepia-toned photos of her family wearing cowboy outfits. Genene has a tendency to smile when other people might cry. Some viewers of the documentary said she came across as cold, but she confesses that she just shuts down when confronted with overwhelming emotions. Since Ryan’s death, she’s filled stacks of notebooks with thoughts about her son.

When Ryan was growing up, the family moved a dozen times, across the country: Tahoe to New Jersey, back to California, Colorado, and even Hawaii. “Everyone would ask if we were in the military,” she said. “But Tim was just restless.”

He was also dangerously unpredictable and seriously mentally ill: Diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia, he drank and heard voices. Some days he organized scavenger hunts for his kids; others, he’d smack them around. Once Tim hit Genene for refusing to give him the bullets he wanted to use to commit suicide. When Ryan was 10, Genene had had enough and took the children to live in a safe house. After about two years of moving around, she took the boys to Las Vegas, where her parents lived.

Ryan grew into a cheerful teen, so skilled on a skateboard that a local dealership offered to sponsor him. Like many kids in his high school, he drank and experimented

In Need of a Fix: The grim state of the rehab industry —Samantha Michaels

18.7 million Americans needed alcohol treatment in 2010.

1.7 million received it.

Reasons addicts give for not getting help:

45.5% **Can't afford it/inadequate health coverage**

24.5% **Not ready to stop using**

9% **Don't know where to go**

8% **No transportation/inconvenience**

6.6% **Worried about their job**

Too Few Clinics

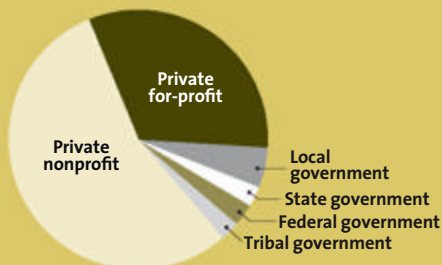
There are **14,148** addiction treatment facilities in America. Very few include inpatient services:

81% **Outpatient**

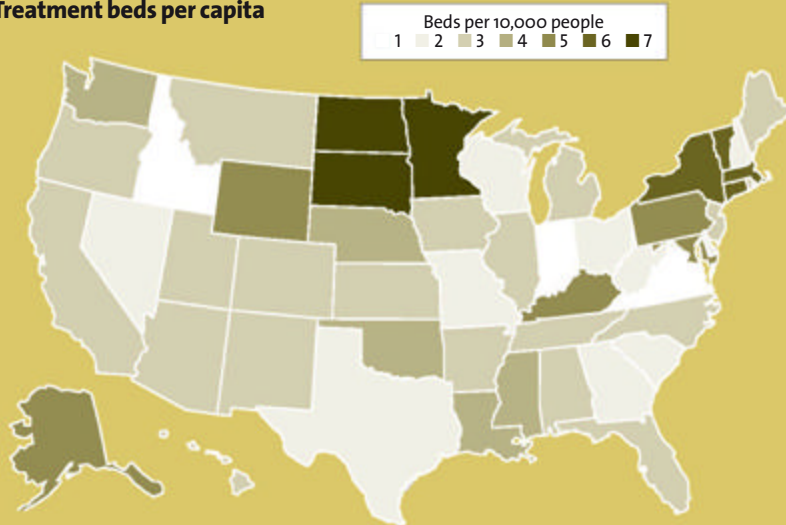
26% **Residential**

6% **Hospital inpatient**

This is who runs them:



Treatment beds per capita



High Prices

Private insurers covered only

15%

of the costs of alcohol addiction treatment. While it's possible to get free treatment at charities like the Salvation Army, a month of residential care can cost as little as **\$1,800** at a government-subsidized center and up to **\$60,000** at the kind of facility that helps celebrities like Lindsay Lohan.

Sources: National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse, Columbia University; Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Poor Oversight

20 states require either no degree or only a high school diploma to become a certified addiction counselor.

Only **10 states** require residential treatment programs to have a physician on staff.

Only **8 states** require the same of outpatient treatment programs.

Only **21 states** require the tracking of patient outcomes.

Cost to Society

Alcohol addiction costs

\$259 billion each year.

1 percent (**\$28 billion**) of total health care costs in 2010 went to treating drug and alcohol addiction.

For every dollar federal and state governments spent,

95.6 cents

went to pay for the consequences of substance use; only 1.9 cents were spent on any type of prevention or treatment.

with marijuana. He even dabbled with meth, but it didn't seem out of control. When he was 19, his paternal grandparents asked if he wanted to live with them to help care for his grandmother, who'd always doted on him.

There, in South Lake Tahoe, Ryan met Shaleen Miller, an outspoken 28-year-old single mother with a Bettie Page vibe. Her interests ranged from the British occultist Aleister Crowley to ribald jokes, and it was love at first sight. "There was just something about Ryan," she said. "Anyone

who met him loved him. He had this light to him I'd never seen before." Shaleen's two daughters adored him, and they would make up stories together. Soon Shaleen and Ryan were engaged.

But when Ryan's grandmother passed away, he began drinking more heavily. A year and a half later, in 2008, his father—who had sobered up and reengaged in the lives of his sons—died of a blood clot at age 47. Ryan helped his grandfather clear out Tim's room in a Carson City hotel and

soon spiraled further out of control. These two deaths marked a turning point in Ryan's life. Genene grasped the scope of the problem when she found him unconscious on his filthy bed, surrounded by more than 50 empty vodka bottles of all shapes and sizes. She couldn't wake him up.

In 2009, Ryan secured a free charity bed at a 30-day treatment program in South Lake Tahoe. He liked it, but once he returned to his familiar surroundings, he started drinking again. (The National In-

stitute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism notes that 90 percent of alcoholics will experience at least one relapse during their first four years of sobriety.) Over the following two years, he was hospitalized several times for alcohol poisoning, including a stint lasting more than a month in intensive care.

In an attempt to jolt Ryan from his addiction, Shaleen broke off their engagement, but she remained determined to try to save him from himself. The average wait for subsidized treatment was six months, she and Genene were told, and Ryan would have to call every morning until a spot opened up. This was what he had done to get into the South Lake Tahoe program, but now he was too far gone to pick up the phone.

Desperate, Genene talked to a police officer she knew, and learned that her best shot might be to get Ryan arrested to force him into treatment. It was reasonably well-founded advice: The 2012 Columbia report found that 44 percent of addicts in publicly funded treatment programs are referred by the criminal-justice system, but only 6 percent come in via health care providers. When Genene heard that Ryan had tried heroin, she called the police. But his grandfather bailed him out, and the case stalled.

Then Shaleen stumbled upon a Craigslist ad from Pioneer Productions, a London television production company that was looking for severe alcoholics willing to be filmed in return for free treatment. Shaleen wrote an email and got a call the next day.

Pioneer declined to answer questions about the case, but Ryan's family says the crew told them that they chose Bay Recovery because the clinic treated chronic pain as well as addiction, making it a good fit for Ryan's twin struggles with alcoholism and his damaged hip. The clinic's website boasted of its association with reality television producers like Lifetime and A&E and of the "unequaled" care provided by its medical director, Jerry Rand. Genene never found out who covered the cost of Ryan's treatment.

Shaleen and one of the Pioneer crew dropped Ryan off in San Diego. "I just lost it," she told me. For two years, she'd been emotionally preparing for him to die. Now, she allowed herself to take heart.

"Hope can be a bastard," she said.

Even as Ryan arrived at Bay Recovery, Rand was fighting for his professional life. In 1988, when he was a general practitioner in Hun-



tington Beach, the Orange County Superior Court had temporarily ordered him to stop practicing. The case came about after a woman whose daughter he was treating for a possible ear infection bolted out of Rand's office and told a state medical board investigator—who happened to be sitting in the waiting room—that Rand was so impaired that his speech was slurred, his eyes were bloodshot, and he couldn't even stand up straight. Though Rand sought treatment for his addiction to the pain pills he'd been prescribed after a back injury, the state medical board moved ahead and put his license on probation for seven years. By 1990, he had found work at a recovery center, and in 1992, he launched his own. By 2002, he was an associate director at Bay Recovery.

In 2003, Rand was barred from practicing for 60 days and put on seven years' probation for what the medical board deemed gross negligence and incompetent treatment of a homeless patient. The board's report does not detail what ended up happening to the patient, but in 2009—the same year Rand became Bay Recovery's executive director—the medical board moved to revoke his license entirely. This time, the accusations included gross negligence in treating a 29-year-old woman who drowned in the bathtub at Bay Recovery. Rand had engaged in "extreme polypharmacy," the board alleged, prescribing drugs to multiple patients with little regard for their interactions. Bay Recovery's operations were unaffected. The California Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs (DADP) investigated the drowning and ordered immediate steps to secure medications, but it did not issue any citations for 16 months.

What transpired at Bay Recovery is one example of why the rehab regulatory sys-

Clockwise from left: Ryan, as a child, in one of his many homes; teenage Ryan happy in Las Vegas; adult Ryan with his onetime fiancée, Shaleen Miller

tem is so often described as fragmented. DADP was responsible for licensing the facility, but it's unclear whether it knew about Rand's earlier probations. And while the medical board had charged that Rand was admitting patients who were too medically and psychologically unstable to be treated at his facility, DADP never addressed this issue while Ryan was alive.

In 2012, as a nonpartisan investigator for the California Senate, I wrote a report that exposed problems in drug and alcohol treatment facilities, including deaths that occurred when programs failed to monitor medically fragile clients or accepted addicts too sick to be in a nonmedical setting. My report found that DADP failed to pursue evidence of violations after deaths, and took as long as a year and a half to investigate the serious charges. At the time of Ryan's death, I had been asking the agency for several months why it was allowing Bay Recovery to continue treating clients. I also interviewed Rand about Bay Recovery's troubles for my report, but he was dismissive. The woman who died had hoarded drugs, he said, and had previously overdosed. He refused to talk about Ryan's death. I was not able to reach him for this story.

Ryan did not have a cellphone with him, but he borrowed other residents' phones to update Shaleen. He told her that detox—the first 72 hours without a drink—was not as bad as he had feared. He said he was "eating

like a pig,” putting on weight, and could not remember when he’d felt so well. He joked that he was having a tough time sitting in a hot tub overlooking the ocean. And he was making friends with staff and fellow patients. “Everybody loved him,” Kanika Swafford, a residential technician at Bay Recovery, told me. “He never felt sorry for himself. He never blamed anyone for the choices he made.”

On May 30, 10 days after Ryan arrived, Rand started him on buprenorphine, or “bupe,” which is often used to treat opiate addicts and may also help those who suffer from chronic pain. But it is not for everyone, and it came on top of a whole cocktail of other medications.

The day after starting on bupe, Ryan began to feel sick, according to a later report by the San Diego medical examiner, and in the following days he rapidly deteriorated. Sweaty and disoriented, he now could not hold a conversation. He urinated on the floor and tried to set things on fire. He grabbed at objects that were out of reach and tried to light a nonexistent cigarette. He told a staff member, “Thank you for the sandwiches; my ride is here.” One resident filed a complaint to Bay Recovery’s management, stating that Ryan was “hallucinating, talking to himself, stumbling about and almost falling down the stairs” and had turned a “gray-white color.” A residential technician told a counselor and one of the managers that Ryan needed medical attention.

The evening of June 5, a 20-year-old medical assistant named Giselle Jones heard banging from Ryan’s bedroom and found him on the floor of his closet, digging frantically through his things. She and a resident named Robert tried to put him back in bed, but he kept falling out, getting so agitated that he tried to crawl out a window. Jones tried to reach Rand and his brother Mitch, who was a manager of Bay Recovery, several times.

When Rand finally responded to the call, he prescribed more Ativan, an anti-anxiety medication, and Risperdal, an antipsychotic. Jones hesitated. The charts noted he’d already had two prior doses of both drugs earlier that evening. Was Rand certain she should give Ryan more? Even after he said yes, she called her manager, who told her to follow the doctor’s orders. She did, and 20 minutes later Ryan became listless. Jones tried to get him into bed, but every time she managed to move him, he collapsed. She

watched as Ryan’s breathing became more labored. His pulse stopped for five minutes. Jones tried to reach Rand again, but there was no answer. Then she called her manager. Finally, at 3 a.m., she called 911. Robert, the other patient, performed CPR on Ryan. They waited for an ambulance.

At 3:40 a.m., Ryan was pronounced dead.

Later that morning, Shaleen tried to text Ryan via one of the other residents’ phones and eventually she got a response: “I’ll have the director call you back.” She left more messages, one more urgent than the next. She finally got a call back. “I could get in trouble if they knew I had contacted you,” the person said. “But we all loved Ryan so much.”

“I heard ‘loved’ and I just collapsed,” Shaleen said. She dropped the phone. Soon after, a police officer, whom authorities in San Diego had asked to contact the family, appeared at Genene’s door.

The San Diego medical examiner found that Ryan had died of acute respiratory distress syndrome, in which damage to the lungs prevents oxygen from reaching the blood. The deterioration apparently began around the time Rand started him on bupe, which—along with some of the other medications he’d prescribed Ryan—can depress breathing. While the evidence was not conclusive, “the suggestion is somehow that the treatment played a role in the development of the condition,” Dr. Jonathan Lucas, who certified the cause of death, told me.

Twenty days after Ryan’s death, officials from the Drug Enforcement Administration, the medical board, and the state licensing agency raided Bay Recovery and Rand’s home. They had already found that Rand had had employees illegally call in prescriptions for him under the name of another doctor. The state suspended Bay Recovery’s licenses in July 2012.

On September 6, 2012, the California medical board ordered Rand to surrender his medical license and “lose all rights and privileges as a Physician and Surgeon in California.” Police investigated Ryan’s death, and while no charges were filed against Rand, the state did find Bay Recovery “deficient” for failing to get Ryan to a hospital. Residents told state investigators that Rand excessively prescribed drugs with little regard for their interactions. One patient said he hadn’t been on

any medications when he arrived, but now was taking at least 10. The state finally revoked Bay Recovery’s licenses and closed the facility in late 2012.

Pioneer Productions sent flowers and paid to have Ryan’s body cremated. It also gave Genene \$1,020—money it had raised to help pay for Ryan to get his hip replaced. Pioneer wanted to arrange a memorial service, and a few weeks later family and friends gathered at Monitor Pass, an open slope south of Lake Tahoe with a dizzying view of Nevada’s basins and ranges, to scatter Ryan’s ashes. The crew filmed one last scene.

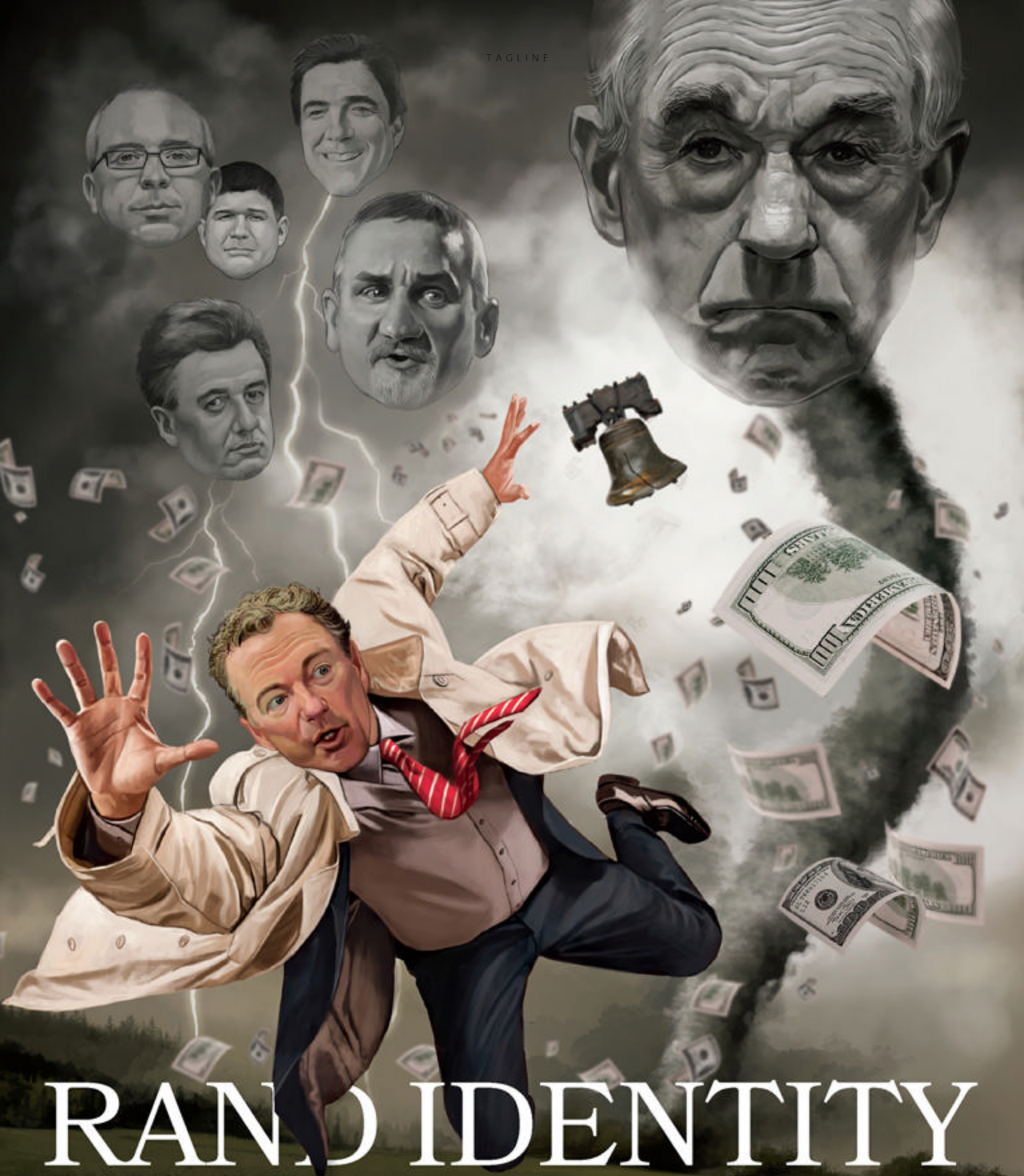
About a month after the memorial service, Pioneer told Genene that the company was sending someone from London to show her the film. A lawyer appeared a few days later and left Genene alone to watch the documentary on his laptop. She did—twice. The lawyer returned with a form for her to sign that stated she had seen the film and wanted it to run. Genene, feeling strong-armed so soon after losing her son, refused, but when the lawyer called from London a few days later to say that Pioneer had decided not to air the film on the National Geographic Channel, she was heartbroken. Genene and Ryan’s other relatives and friends saw the documentary as his legacy.

Eventually, things were resolved and Ryan’s documentary aired. Many viewers responded, expressing grief as well as concern. “I find this very strange, folks,” one posted online comment said. “The danger zone for any addict is the first 5 days at most. 17 days in he should have been feeling great and refreshed...I don’t think this documentary is telling the honest truth about what really happened to poor Ryan.”

To this day, Shaleen still gets Facebook messages from all over the world, and she shared grief has helped her cope. “That’s just an amazing thing to be able to hold on to,” she said. “Knowing his story made it out there. It gave some kind of purpose to it.”

But Genene continues to write in her notebooks the questions that plague her. Did Pioneer really want to help Ryan, or was it just about ratings? How could the state have allowed Bay Recovery to stay open after the death in the bathtub and the medical board’s case against Rand? Someone was bound to die there, she believes: “If it wasn’t Ryan, it would have been somebody else. And my son had to pay the ultimate price for trying to do the right thing.” ■

TAGLINE



RAND IDENTITY

A posse of roguish political operatives made Rand Paul one of the hottest names in conservative politics. Will they also torpedo his 2016 hopes?

BY ANDY KROLL

ILLUSTRATIONS BY MARK HAMMERMEISTER

ON DECEMBER 26, 2011, a week before Iowa's first-in-the-nation presidential caucuses, an influential Republican state senator named Kent Sorenson and his wife, Shawnee, arrived at a steak house in Altoona, a suburb of Des Moines. A goateed Mr. Clean look-alike, Sorenson was a hot commodity. His deep ties to the state's evangelical leaders and homeschooling activists made his endorsement highly sought after by GOP presidential hopefuls, particularly the second-tier contenders who had staked their campaigns on a strong Iowa showing. Sorenson had picked his horse early, signing on as Michele Bachmann's Iowa chairman in June 2011—a coup for the Minnesota congresswoman's upstart campaign.

Joining the Sorensons was a bespectacled political operative named Dimitri Kesari, the deputy campaign manager of Rep. Ron Paul's 2012 presidential bid. As caucus day neared, Ron Paul's campaign was surging in the polls but needed a late boost if he wanted to meet his goal of finishing in the top three.

That's where Sorenson came in.

When the state senator left to use the restroom, Kesari produced a \$25,000 check—drawn from the account of Designer Goldsmiths, a jewelry store run by his wife—and gave it to Shawnee Sorenson. Two days later, Kent Sorenson left a Bachmann campaign event, drove straight to a Ron Paul rally, and declared that he had defected.

As it turned out, Paul's inner circle had been secretly negotiating for months to lure Sorenson away from the Bachmann campaign. In an October memo to Paul campaign manager John Tate, a Sorenson ally outlined the state senator's demands, which included an \$8,000-a-month payment for nearly a year, another \$5,000-a-month check for a colleague of Sorenson's, and a \$100,000 donation to Sorenson's political action committee. The memo explained that these payments would not only secure Sorenson's support in the near term but also help to "build a major state-based movement that will involve far more people into a future Rand Paul presidential run." Kesari's \$25,000 check, in other words, amounted to more than a down payment on an endorsement for Ron Paul; it was an investment in Rand Paul 2016.

With the 2016 Iowa caucuses nine months away, that investment now looks more like a liability. The Sorenson deal exploded into public view in 2013, thanks to a pair of whistleblowers from the Ron Paul and Bachmann campaigns, and the episode now hangs over Rand Paul and his inner circle like a dark cloud.

The Sorenson scandal has sparked state and federal investigations. After resigning his seat in 2013, Sorenson pleaded guilty last year to two criminal charges for which he faces up to 25 years in prison. The episode involves central figures in the Paul family's political apparatus, including Kesari and Jesse Benton, who served in senior roles on Rand and Ron Paul's recent campaigns. (Benton is also married to Ron Paul's granddaughter and Rand's niece.) And it has pulled back the curtain on the roguish band of advisers, political organizers, and fundraisers whose sometimes sketchy tactics have fueled Rand Paul's political ascent. This crew—call it Paul World—reflects the damn-the-rules, libertarian world-

view of the candidate himself. But as Paul may find out, the brash operatives largely responsible for his political rise could end up posing a major threat to his national ambitions.

"It's a strange universe," says a conservative strategist who's well acquainted with members of the Pauls' inner circle. "You've got the real *Star Wars* cantina identified—Hammerhead, Greedo—and let's be honest, a lot of these guys would not have work in the mainstream, even in the tea party."

Many of the central players in Paul World hail from the National Right to Work Committee, the leading anti-union group where these operatives spent their formative political years. Doug Stafford, who is Rand Paul's Karl Rove, is a former NRTWC vice president. John Tate, Ron Paul's former campaign manager, worked with Stafford at the NRTWC; he is now the president of Campaign for Liberty, the political group founded by the elder Paul. Kesari—described by someone who knows him as "like Radar from *M*A*S*H*"—previously led the NRTWC's government affairs department. Mike Rothfeld headed the committee's direct-mail operation in the late '80s and early '90s; he now runs the fundraising firm of choice for Rand Paul's PAC, as well as the NRTWC and Campaign for Liberty.

Thanks in large part to this crew, Rand Paul has broken into the political mainstream, a feat never achieved by his father. But some of the operatives who have formed the backbone of his machine have at times thought little of stretching the rules to win elections and acquire power. And their past tactics may come back to haunt Paul during what could be the most important campaign of his political career.

OF THE GOP'S current presidential hopefuls, Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker is most closely associated with an anti-union agenda, due to his 2011 law curbing collective bargaining for the state's public-sector unions. But the Republican whose policy stances pose the most direct threat to labor is Rand Paul. In the eyes of the National Right to Work Committee, one former NRTWC staffer told me, "he is the golden child."

After Paul was sworn into the Senate in 2011, one of the first pieces of legislation he cosponsored was the National Right-to-Work Act, the committee's holy grail. The bill—also championed by Ron Paul—would make every state in the union a so-called right-to-work state and eviscerate organized labor as we know it. (Twenty-five states currently have such laws, banning unions from collecting dues from nonmembers to pay for representing those workers and bargaining on their behalf.) Since 2013, Paul has twice more introduced the legislation. (The bill never has gotten out of committee.)

He has frequently lent his name to NRTWC fundraising emails and petitions drumming up support for the bill and the group. Days after Paul took office, an NRTWC email blast went out under his name spelling out his intentions: "They snickered when I said I came to the US Senate to change Congress," it reads. "But their laughter stopped when I sponsored the National Right to Work Act to free US workers from forced unionization and break Big Labor's multi-billion

dollar political machine forever.”

Paul has credited John Tate, a former NRTWC vice president, with playing a “crucial role” in assembling his 2010 Senate campaign, including introducing Paul to Stafford, now his closest adviser. NRTWC donated \$7,500 to that campaign and deployed field staffers and other personnel to Kentucky to support Paul during his primary fight against establishment-backed Trey Grayson. In an email sent the day after Paul’s primary upset, an NRTWC staffer congratulated the committee’s field organizers: “What a week of History, and you get to say you were a part of it. Nice job!”

Just as the libertarian-leaning Pauls have worn the Republican label with unease, the 60-year-old NRTWC hasn’t always played well with the conservative movement or the GOP. (The mantra inside NRTWC, says an ex-staffer from the 1990s, was: “We’re Right-to-Work. We hate everybody.”) The group’s origins on the far right (its longest-serving president, Reed Larson, was affiliated with the John Birch Society) and fixation solely on defeating labor unions created a cultlike atmosphere in which even allies on the right were viewed with suspicion. “There has been a culture from the beginning of isolation and hyper-self-reliance,” says a former NRTWC senior staffer. “It’s the hermit kingdom of the conservative movement.”

Still, throughout the ’80s and ’90s, the committee gained respect for its brutally efficient political operation. It was one of the first outside groups to create an in-house phone bank to influence elections around the country, an operation that proved so successful that NRTWC spun it off into a stand-alone firm named Liberty Phone Center, Inc. Mike Rothfeld, a heavily caffeinated, hard-charging mentor to a generation of Virginia political consultants, cut his teeth running NRTWC’s direct-mail shop; he went on to form his own fundraising firm, Saber Communications, the Paul World’s go-to consultancy. (A born-again Southerner whose office features a mural of Confederate General J.E.B. Stuart, Rothfeld is no libertarian: He once referred to Ron Paul’s most die-hard supporters as “crazy wabbits.”)

Over the years, NRTWC has served as a training ground for operatives drawn to the group’s zealous focus and its bare-knuckled

style. Former staffers say NRTWC instilled a cutthroat, survival-of-the-fittest mentality in its employees. One former staffer from the 1990s recalls that the group hired nine people for only five or six positions, pitting the new hires against each other to see who came out on top. The group was also notorious for its low pay—until the early 2000s, midlevel staffers got less than \$20,000 a year and worked overtime to eke out a living.

To earn extra cash, NRTWC staffers also moonlighted for political candidates who supported the right-to-work cause—a practice supported by the top brass—often spending lunch breaks and evenings helping candidates with their mail programs or fundraising pitches.

The near-religious devotion to the cause, the hard-ass attitude, and the freelancing all melded to create a win-at-all-costs approach that sometimes saw NRTWC, a tax-exempt nonprofit, disregard campaign laws banning outside groups from coordinating with candidates and officeholders. “They treated the rules as guidelines,” the ex-staffer from the ’90s says.

THE CIRCUITOUS PATH

to the Kent Sorenson debacle leads, of all places, through a dilapidated meth house on the outskirts of Denver. That’s where boxes of files and bank records belonging to Western Tradition Partnership, an energy-company-funded Montana nonprofit created to fight environmentalists, were discovered and handed over to Montana’s Commissioner of Political Practices. As the commissioner later concluded, these files indicated that Western Tradition Partnership and its leader, an operative named Christian LeFer, had possibly broken the law by directly coordinating with candidates for Montana’s Legislature.

LeFer was a key cog in the right-to-work movement. Internal NRTWC emails depict him as the committee’s man on the ground in Montana, where, in addition to Western Tradition Partnership, he ran Montana Citizens for Right to Work. NRTWC funded LeFer’s group to the tune of \$217,600 in 2010 and \$56,500 in 2011, tax records show. After the meth house documents came to light, LeFer and his wife, Allison, sued to reclaim them, but a state judge dismissed their suit in October 2013, and the documents remained in the hands of a federal grand jury investigating Western

Tradition Partnership.

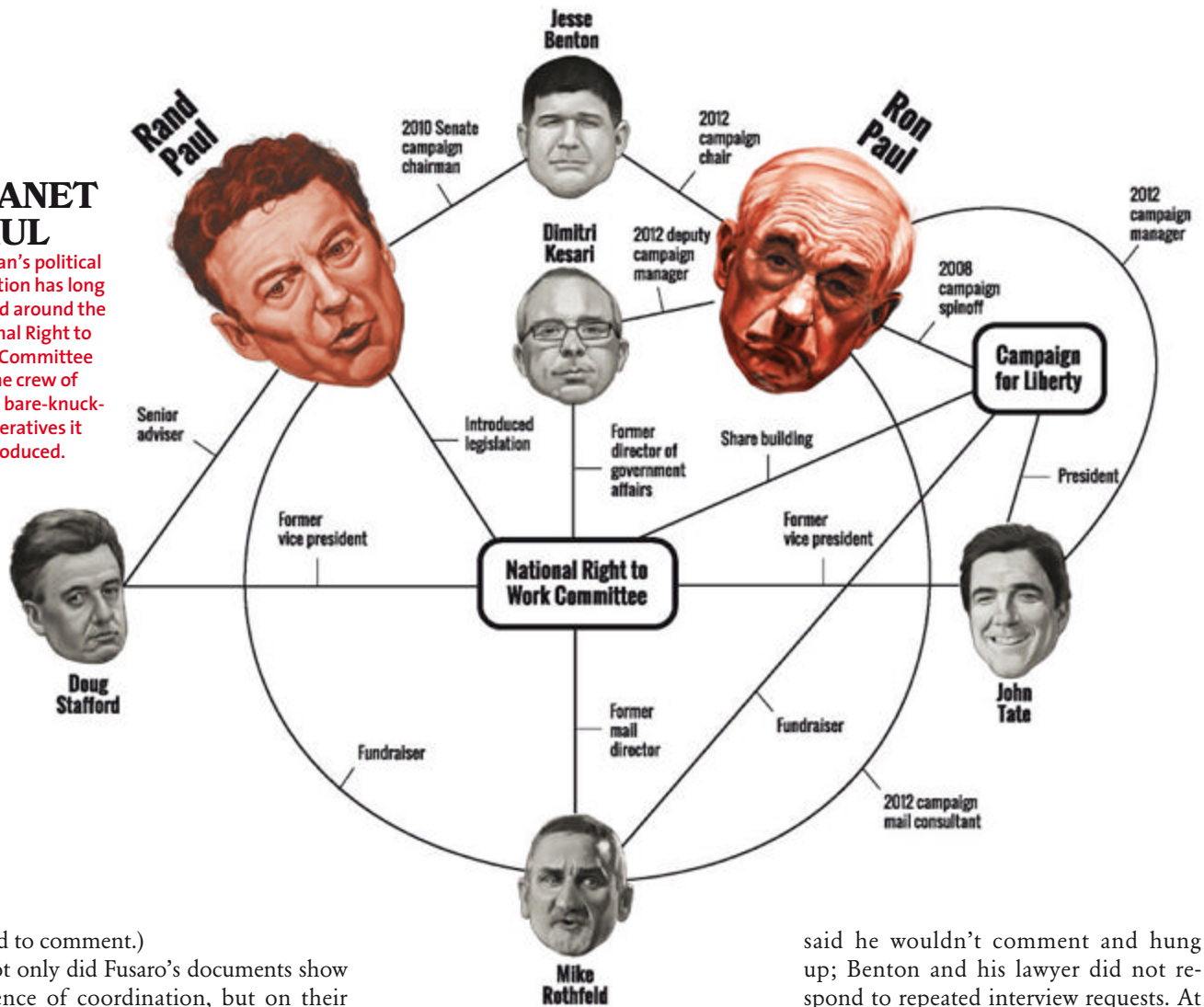
Two thousand miles away, at his home in rural Virginia, a former NRTWC staffer and Ron Paul aide named Dennis Fusaro watched the drama unfolding in Montana with growing alarm. Fusaro knew all too well who LeFer was—in 2009 and 2010, Fusaro worked for NRTWC in Iowa and had been included on many email chains with LeFer. He feared the Montana investigation could spark a probe of NRTWC activities. Fusaro says he tried to bring his complaints to NRTWC leadership, but was rebuffed. (NRTWC did not respond to multiple requests for comment.)

So, in what Fusaro says was an effort to save his own skin, he went public, eventually releasing to conservative bloggers a trove of emails, memos, and other records showing potentially illegal coordination between the NRTWC and a host of GOP candidates. But the biggest bombshell he dropped had to do with Kent Sorenson, whom Fusaro knew well from his days as an NRTWC operative in Iowa. Fusaro had been included on Paul campaign correspondence about securing Sorenson’s endorsement. Attached to one of those emails was the three-page memo outlining Sorenson’s demands for joining Ron Paul’s presidential campaign; its publication in August 2013 fueled the criminal investigation that eventually brought Sorenson down.

Fusaro’s documents also laid bare how NRTWC may have overstepped the rules banning outside groups from coordinating with political candidates. (We’ll spare you the legalese, but coordination is a campaign finance no-no because it provides a way to circumvent contribution limits to political campaigns.) Fusaro’s documents show NRTWC was involved in creating and sending out mailers on behalf of dozens of Republican candidates for the Iowa Legislature in 2010. Mailers ostensibly authored by candidates or their spouses were written on NRTWC computers and later approved by the candidates. In some cases, candidates instructed NRTWC on the mix of Republican and independent voters that should receive their mailers. Helping oversee this NRTWC mail program were two Paul World fixtures: Doug Stafford and Dimitri Kesari. (Stafford, emails obtained by *Mother Jones* show, also worked on Rand Paul’s 2010 Senate campaign while he was an NRTWC employee. Stafford de-

PLANET PAUL

The clan's political operation has long orbited around the National Right to Work Committee and the crew of brash, bare-knuckled operatives it has produced.



clined to comment.)

Not only did Fusaro's documents show evidence of coordination, but on their 2010 tax forms NRTWC and a Midwestern affiliate told the IRS they didn't plan to get involved in *any* political work that year. Marcus Owens, a tax lawyer who from 1990 to 2000 ran the IRS division that oversees tax-exempt groups, says that filing false tax reports "could not only be a civil problem but a criminal one."

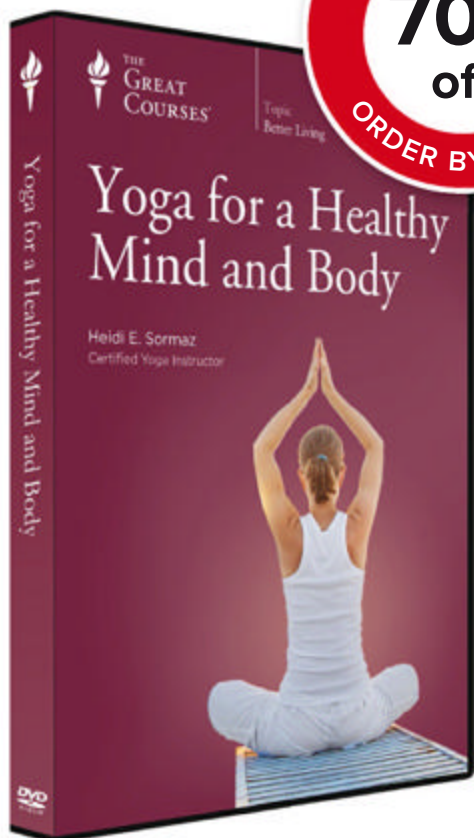
While it is unclear whether Fusaro's documents have prompted IRS scrutiny of NRTWC, they caused a world of hurt for Kent Sorenson. Nearly three years after his dramatic switch to the Ron Paul campaign, Sorenson pleaded guilty to covering up payments from both the Paul and Bachmann campaigns—her campaign was secretly paying him as well—and to obstructing an investigation into the payments. Sorenson never ultimately cashed Kesari's jewelry store check, but he admitted to receiving payments totaling \$73,000, which an Iowa Senate ethics investigation all but concluded came from the Paul campaign.

Had the Sorenson saga ended there, Rand Paul and his presidential team could probably breathe easy. But on February 19, a Justice Department lawyer requested a delay in sentencing Sorenson because the feds were "making progress" on a "larger investigation" into the scandal. This prompted conservative radio host Steve Deace to tweet: "Asteroid coming. Impact could produce potentially large blast radius." The DOJ did not say who else was in its crosshairs, but emails and internal documents show that Benton and Kesari both played roles in the deal. Sorenson, for his part, isn't holding anything back. "He's cooperating and answering their questions about all the information that he knows," says F. Montgomery Brown, Sorenson's attorney.

In the meantime, Paul World has lawyered up. Ron Paul's 2012 campaign has shelled out \$364,000 in legal fees since August. Reached on his cellphone, Kesari

said he wouldn't comment and hung up; Benton and his lawyer did not respond to repeated interview requests. At least publicly, Rand Paul has said little to suggest he's worried about the legal headaches that may ensnare Paul World fixtures. In December—before the Justice Department's latest announcement but after emails showed Jesse Benton's involvement in the Sorenson deal, prompting Benton's resignation as Sen. Mitch McConnell's 2014 campaign manager—Paul defended Benton to the *Hill* newspaper as an "honest" political operative who would be "welcome" on his 2016 team. "He'll help us," Paul said.

But as a Rand Paul presidential campaign edges closer to becoming a reality, questions linger about how long his cadre of advisers and operatives will last under the merciless glare of the national stage. "They are in such a bubble in this Rand Paul universe, and I think the bubble's going to pop real quick in the heat of the primaries," says the conservative strategist familiar with the Pauls and their allies. "They are not ready for prime time." ■



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SUPER AGENT MAN

Jeremy Piven nailed his role as a Hollywood shark. Now can he convince America he's a gentleman? **BY MICHAEL MECHANIC**

JEREMY PIVEN WANTS YOU TO KNOW he's boring. Or, rather, he's nothing like Ari Gold, the brash, tactless, and yet somehow likable Hollywood agent he portrayed over eight seasons of HBO's *Entourage*, winning three Emmys and a Golden Globe for best supporting actor. His parents were founding members of Chicago's Playwrights Theatre Club—which spawned the Second City improv troupe—and Piven Theatre Workshop, whose well-known alumni include the Cusack siblings, Aidan Quinn, Lili Taylor, and Piven himself. After earning a theater degree at

Iowa's Drake University, Piven landed a series of small parts in film and television, including serial gigs on *Ellen* and *The Larry Sanders Show*. But it was *Entourage*, inspired by the Hollywood escapades of executive producer Mark Wahlberg, that made him famous. (The film version hits theaters June 5.) For his subsequent role as a department store visionary in the Masterpiece drama *Mr. Selfridge*, now in its third season, the 49-year-old actor had to summon his anti-Ari. "Ari Gold was all bark and no bite," Piven says. "Harry Selfridge is all bite and no bark."

Mother Jones: Will the *Entourage* movie appeal to people who don't know the show?

Jeremy Piven: I saw a rough cut with a friend who had never seen the series, and she loved it. Even though these characters are all based on real-life characters—Mark Wahlberg *has* an entourage—they're all archetypes: There's that Johnny "Drama" character everyone takes shots at; the ones who wear their hearts on their sleeves and are desperately trying to get ahead but can't quite make it; the lethargic Turtles of the world who leech off others; and the over-achievers, the Aris of the world. So it works.

MJ: How close is Ari to his real-world inspiration, Rahm Emanuel's kid brother?

JP: It's not a biopic. Ari Emanuel is an incredibly ambitious, successful Hollywood agent from a family of overachievers. He's brilliant and hardworking and reactive. You take your cues from these people and then just use a lot of dramatic license.

MJ: He reportedly insisted you get the part.

JP: What I heard was, they went to him with a list of actors and he thought I might be equipped to play the role. The way I play Ari Gold is rooted in *commedia dell'arte*, an Italian form I studied with Tim Robbins. But none of this will ever make it into print! What's interesting is, "Isn't Jeremy Piven Ari Gold?" Ari Gold would have no patience for Jeremy Piven. Jeremy Piven is looking for a really cool project, an independent movie or a play or whatever. Ari Gold is looking for payday.

MJ: How would Ari describe you?

JP: As some ridiculous thespian that's just, you know, "Go away!" Ari lives in so many dualities: He loves his wife, he's monogamous, yet he will look at every woman that passes by. His methods are unsound, but he's trying to put food on the table for his family. It gives him a certain license to be that reckless.

MJ: And Harry Selfridge?

JP: He's the antithesis. The way he runs his professional life is through treating every employee as an equal and inspiring everyone in London to be the best version of themselves. Now, he's much more of a disaster than Ari. His professional ideology was spotless, but at night he was a slave to his urges and loved to gamble and cheat on his wife. Going over to England and being a part of this incredible series seems like the best work of my life. It hasn't really been seen in the States to the level that *Entourage*



"I was a meth baby," this 17-year-old told photographer Richard Ross, who has spent the past eight years documenting the lives of incarcerated kids. His new book, *Girls in Justice*, pairs images from juvenile facilities with stark statistics. The girl in the photo said she was abused by an adult at age seven, but waited six years to tell the police: "I don't think they did anything."

In a DOJ-funded study of 100 South Carolina girls in detention, subjects reported that they'd...

Witnessed a murder:

35%

Been sexually abused by an adult:

44%

Been physically abused by a caregiver:

50%

Had a caregiver who served time:

54%

Had "consensual" sex with an adult:

69%

Source: Dana DeHart

was, but it's a big hit, sold to over 160 countries. When people see me overseas, they say, "Hey, Mr. Selfridge!" You're in people's living rooms as this turn-of-the-century gentleman. So they react to me differently than screaming, "Hey Ari, you're such an asshole. Come here, you little asshole!"

MJ: You get that from fans?

JP: Yeah. Listen, it's your job to embrace your characters. If people think you play something so authentically that you *are* that character, that's a great compliment. And then they meet me and they say, "Who is *this*? And why are you so calm? Are you stoned?" [Laughs.] Like, no. This is actually who I am.

MJ: So what do you like about being famous?

JP: I'll tell you what I love: I'm able to go back every year and help the Piven Theatre raise money. It's a not-for-profit and has kids on scholarship. They work with this

great program called Off the Street Club where we bring in kids from the inner city and teach them improv and character work. That's heavy, man! These kids don't have any reference for being an actor in their lives. And then they can come in and interact creatively.

MJ: Growing up on stage sounds magical.

JP: Well, the grass is always greener. I was playing high school football at the same time I was on the stage, so my life was a bit of a hybrid. I was very lucky in that way. And, you know, there aren't any 5-foot-9 linebackers in the NFL, so there's only so far I could've gone.

MJ: You've developed sort of a knack for playing obnoxious characters.

JP: When you grow up in Chicago, you don't have a chance to audition for the bigger roles. You're basically taking the scraps. For my first 20 or 30 movies, I was taking

“best friend No. 3” and trying to make a meal out of it. My stage life was completely different. I got to play incredible roles from literature, whereas, in front of a camera, I had to make something out of nothing. So that’s maybe where it came from.

MJ: Given your improv training, how much of Ari’s dialogue was unscripted?

JP: [Entourage creator] Doug Ellin is a stickler for the words, and his writing is so brilliant that it’s basically like doing your haftarah—you can’t improvise. (Sorry, that was a reference to my bar mitzvah.) If the world thinks it was improv, I’m very happy. The goal, every time you’re acting, is to make it look like it’s the first time you ever thought or spoke or did any of that.

MJ: Do you prefer acting on stage, or screen?

JP: I love all the mediums, but you are what

you are. I’m a physical, comedic stage actor. I act head-to-toe. You’re always trying to fine-tune it so that it fits to the screen. I did *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* on stage as Gonzo the attorney, and I played Methuselah the 900-year-old man when I was 24—people thought it was my father in the role. It was really fun. I would love to get back to that.

MJ: What do you do when you’re off work?

JP: Well, I play the drums any chance I get. I have a drum set in London when I’m doing *Mr. Selfridge*. I think my neighbors hate me.

MJ: Do you have a band?

JP: Yeah. We hang out on Sundays and play covers—the Stones, Zeppelin, Tom Petty, Jimi Hendrix. It’s a blast.

MJ: What’s this I hear about you wanting to portray Keith Moon?

JP: Yeah. He was kind of the first real rock

star: a proper British gentleman during the day and then just a lunatic at night—incredibly reckless and brilliant at the same time.

MJ: Is somebody planning a biopic?

JP: No. Wishful thinking.

MJ: The comedian John Oliver recently suggested uses for some of the excess rooms in the Turkish president’s 1,000-room mansion. One of them was a “Pivenary,” the world’s largest collection of photos of Jeremy Piven...outside of Jeremy Piven’s own home. Where did that joke come from?

JP: Does John Oliver know me? I’ve never met him. Listen, I played a character for eight seasons that represents a certain brash arrogance that exists in Hollywood, so the lines are blurred. You can’t take that stuff personally. The fact that I’m even on that guy’s radar is exciting. ■

BOOKS



Arms and the Dudes

By Guy Lawson
SIMON & SCHUSTER

It sounds like a comedy flick: Three stoners with few qualifications set out to become big-time international arms dealers. They start bidding on, and landing, Pentagon contracts. They outfox savvy international conglomerates, scoring a \$300 million deal to supply mortar rounds, grenades, rockets, and 100 million rounds of AK-47 ammo to the Afghan military. As if that weren’t audacious enough, they secretly (illegally) fulfill the order with low-grade, decades-old Chinese ammo—and then things really get crazy. *Arms and the Dudes* includes mafiosi, hustlers, Kyrgyz secret police, blackmail, transnational grudges, and a shocking indictment of how America became the globe’s leading arms dealer. Journalist Guy Lawson’s latest may be nonfiction, but it’s bloody entertaining. —**Bryan Schatz**



Bringing Down Gaddafi

By Andrei Netto
PALGRAVE
MACMILLAN

Andrei Netto snuck into Libya in 2011, during the heady days of the Arab Spring, and found rebels of “noble, almost poetic aspirations.” He stayed long enough to see the revolution’s moral downfall, culminating in the execution of deposed dictator Moammar Gaddafi. This riveting account is a tale of mercenaries and freedom fighters, corrupt politicians, and war crimes on all sides. But Netto also highlights the humanity of the civilians caught in the middle, and their ongoing struggle for a stable and peaceful nation. —**B.S.**



Under the Bus

By Caroline Fredrickson
THE NEW PRESS
Facebook’s Sheryl

Sandberg encourages women to “lean in” and become leaders while former State Department official Anne-Marie Slaughter insists we “can’t have it all.” But what of women who

lack the luxury of leaning in or opting out because they’re struggling just to get by? They’re the focus of *Under the Bus*, which unpacks the history of the racism and sexism that has left so many working women and people of color without adequate protections. Author Caroline Fredrickson explains how sloppily written laws have made women, particularly in domestic and service jobs, vulnerable to low wages, long hours, and sexual harassment, and then offers up fixes for this broken, exclusive system. —**Samantha Michaels**

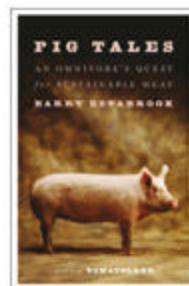
FILM

Don’t Think I’ve Forgotten: Cambodia’s Lost Rock and Roll

ARGOT PICTURES

On the surface, *Don’t Think I’ve Forgotten* is a film about the flourishing rock movement that

“Six robots gutted the animals, cutting around the rectum, slicing open the belly, splitting the sternum, and hauling out the innards, which were deposited on plastic trays—one tray per pig. Humans separated the intestines from the other viscera and loaded them for immediate shipment to a separate facility to be cleaned of feces and made into casings. The hearts, lungs, livers, tracheas, and kidneys were destined for China and Vietnam, who use them in sausages. One man removed the pigs’ pinkish-white brains by hand and plopped them into a plastic tub...In the two hours I spent at the Danish Crown plant, 2,500 sentient creatures had died and been turned into meat with antiseptic efficiency. Yet I saw nothing cruel or offensive. What did the American meat processors have to hide?” —**Condensed from Pig Tales, by Barry Estabrook**



emerged following Cambodia’s independence from France in 1953. Director John Pirozzi saturates the first half with vintage footage of Cambodia’s ’50s and ’60s music scene, interspersing it with interviews with musicians who survived the ensuing horrors and relatives of those who didn’t. The infectious music blends Chuck Berry-like riffs with

haunting traditional melodies. And even though you know it's coming, the progression of coups, bombings, and genocide is shattering. "If you want to eliminate values from past societies," notes a member of the Cambodian royal family ousted in a US-sponsored coup, "you have to eliminate the artists." —**Luke Whelan**

3½ Minutes

THE FILMMAKER FUND/MOTTO PICTURES

On Black Friday 2012, Jordan Davis, sitting in a friend's car at a Florida gas station, cranked up the rap on the stereo. Three and a half minutes later, he was dead, shot by Michael Dunn, a middle-aged white man bristling at the black teen's "thug music." Director Marc Silver uses Dunn's murder trial to underscore the danger and subjectivity of Florida's Stand Your Ground self-defense law. Especially heartbreaking are interviews with Jordan's parents, who must maintain their decorum as Dunn's lawyers vilify their son—all while wondering whether his killer will walk, as Trayvon Martin's did. (Dunn was found guilty and given life without parole.) In one scene, Davis' dad recalls a text from Martin's father: "I just want to welcome you to a club that none of us want to be in." —**Hannah Levintova**

MUSIC



TRACK 5 "Oh My Northern Soul"

From Shilpa Ray's *Last Year's Savage*
NORTHERN SPY

Liner notes: Oozing cool as she pumps her trademark harmonium, Ray declares independence, murmuring, "I wanna be anything and everything but good."

Behind the music: The New Jersey-raised provocateur previously fronted Beat the Devil and recorded as Shilpa Ray and Her Happy Hookers. Aided by Nick Cave, she covered the Brecht-Weill classic "Pirate Jenny" on 2013's *Son of Rogues Gallery* comp. **Check it out if you like:** The elegantly wasted, i.e., Tom Waits, Jolie Holland, and Marianne Faithfull.



TRACK 1 "Giant"

From Django
Django's *Born Under Saturn*

RIBBON

Liner notes: Known for unlikely blends, the foursome combines sunny vocal harmonies, funky grooves, and surf guitar to refreshing effect on its sophomore album.

Behind the music: The musicians—drummer David Maclean is the brother of Beta Band's John Maclean—met at the Edinburgh College of Art. And no, it's not a Quentin Tarantino reference.

Check it out if you like: Eclectic Brit-poppers like Blur and Arctic Monkeys.



TRACK 2 "Rubble"

From Ambrosia
Parsley's *Weeping Cherry*

BARBES

Liner notes: This eerie ballad finds the former Shvaree leader consumed by existential dread, with droning guitar amplifying the creeping terror.

Behind the music: *Weeping Cherry*, Parsley's solo debut, was inspired by the deaths of friends and relatives, and features AA Bondy and Joan Wasser (from Joan As Police Woman).

Check it out if you like: Angry grown-up pop (Sam Phillips, Jenny Lewis, Neko Case).



Noorbakhsh and Ahmed

Love in the Time of Islamophobia

A new podcast explores the travails of being a Muslim woman in America.

Zahra Noorbakhsh was 12 and attending Farsi school in California when a teacher told her that if she didn't start wearing the hijab, her mother might burn in hell. So she tried it. But a trip to Blockbuster proved mortifying: "Everyone was staring at me and I just kept speaking in English really loudly—'Hey, Dad, I want to get *Monster Truck Bloopers!*'—so I didn't sound like a huge foreign freak."

That's one of the tales she revisits with cohost Tanzila "Taz" Ahmed in their new podcast, *#GoodMuslimBadMuslim*. Comedian Noorbakhsh befriended Ahmed, an activist and writer, on a road trip promoting *Love, InshAllah*, an anthology about the secret love lives of Muslim American women. They began teasing each other about which one was "the bad Muslim," took their discussions of cultural mores to Twitter, and later began recording them.

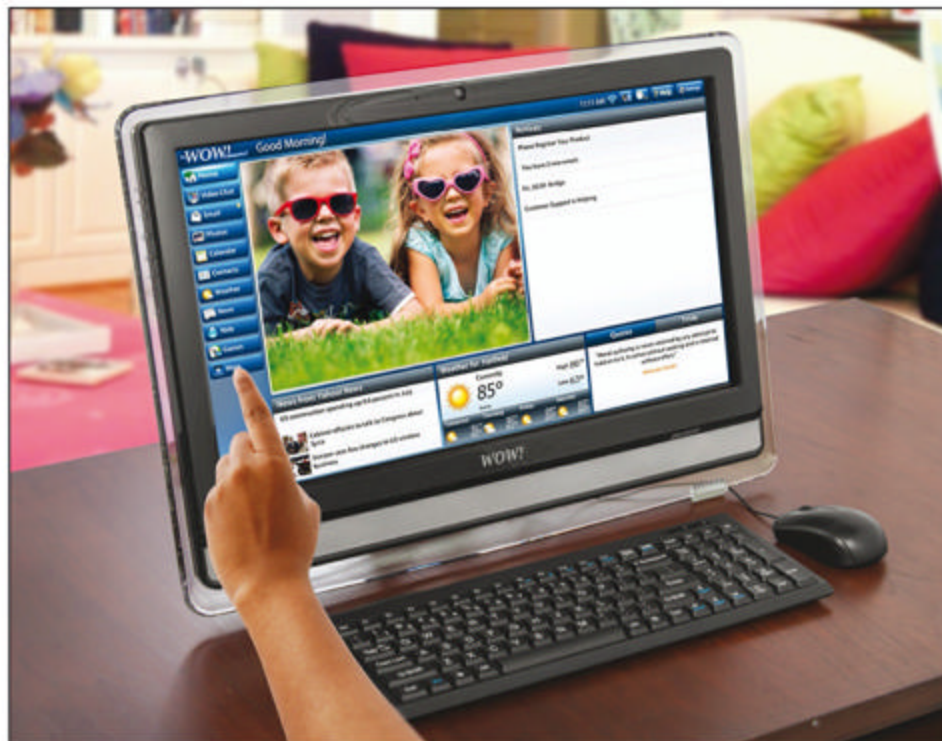
The resulting monthly podcast is a fun, sassy exchange, part *Wayne's World*, part *Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul*. You might catch the ladies issuing a fatwa against bacon, inventing cheesy Muslim pickup lines ("You've hijacked my heart!"), and sharing tips on how to survive your "conservative, gun-toting, libertarian" in-laws. But jokes aside, they address the uniquely confusing contradictions of how Muslim American women are expected to behave. Noorbakhsh prays but drinks and eats pork, and admits to having had sex before her marriage—to an atheist. Ahmed won't touch booze or pork, but she seldom prays, and recalls her parents berating her for wanting to dye her hair pink and go to punk shows.

Just four episodes in, the podcast is earning press attention (NBC News called it "side-splitting") and praise from listeners looking for fresh voices. "For women from these backgrounds to be talking openly about private subjects is a big deal," notes the Iranian-born comedian Maz Jobrani, who once had Noorbakhsh on stage as a guest performer. ("I totally bombed," she recalls.)

The timing is apt, too, as horrors committed in the name of Islam fuel new resentments. Noorbakhsh, a self-declared "loud-mouth," points out that unabashed conversations are key to busting stereotypes. With her comedy act and now the podcast, "everybody was like, 'Oh, you're going to get death threats.' No, actually, just a lot of essays and wiki links from atheists telling me I'm confused. And celebratory email! So I'm doing a lot of reading, not a lot of dying." —**Jaeah Lee**

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— Janet F.

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THE NEW BLACK

Nobel winner Toni Morrison on fashion, ghosts, and the paper bag test



Toni Morrison is no stranger to historical fiction. Her last novel, *Home*, whisked readers into the shoes of a struggling Korean War veteran. *A Mercy*, the one before that, pictured life through the eyes of teenage bondswomen on a 17th-century Anglo-Dutch farm. And who could forget *Beloved*, her wrenching tale of a mother's radical attempt to save her child from slavery in the mid-1800s? But when the octogenarian author sat down to compose her 11th and latest novel, *God Help the Child*, she faced a new challenge. "I was nervous because I didn't have a handle on the contemporary," she told me. "It's very fluid." Leave it to Morrison, a recipient

of the 1993 Nobel Prize in Literature and the Presidential Medal of Freedom, to find a way. Through Bride, her "blue-black" protagonist—who shines in the beauty industry but flails in her relationships—Morrison boldly examines the ways in which a hellish childhood undermines a person's sense of self. —Maddie Oatman

Mother Jones: Why did you want to write about beauty?

Toni Morrison: I began to just look around at what people were doing and saying about themselves. I was very keenly aware of the new, wide-open, very aggressive sexuality that becomes the success, particularly, of a woman. Having looked at part of the Oscars, it was even more obvious.

MJ: What about them?

TM: The clothes. The slits are higher, the breasts are prominent, which they always were, but now it's just about nipples—the only part you cannot show. It just seems hysterical, because that's the first thing any human gets in his mouth! I don't know. I'm 84, so you can imagine how many phases of this I have witnessed.

MJ: Bride capitalizes on her exotic looks to get ahead, but under the surface something's not right.

TM: She's very successful—you know, the "panther in snow." But in her brain, she's returning to that despised little black girl her mother didn't even like.

MJ: Bride's mother, Sweetness, thinks her daughter's dark skin will be her downfall. Yet your own dark-skinned great-grand-

mother felt that she was the pure one—and that you lighter-skinned kids were tainted.

TM: She was very, very, very black. She said we were impure and tampered with. And we were little girls! The only other time I noticed what we call skin privileges was at Howard University. It's a brilliant school. However, there was something called the paper bag test—whether your skin is darker or lighter than a paper bag. There were whole sororities that were proud that they had the lightest skin color. It was shocking to me. I wanted Bride's mother to make explicit the advantages of being a light-skinned Negro. She was under the impression that she had to protect her very black child from these insults. But inside, she shared that kind of revulsion.

MJ: What made you want to focus so much on childhood trauma?

TM: The ideas come to me; I don't search for them. In the process of putting together characters and their language and interior lives, it shapes itself. I just began with a vague notion of what it must be like to be traumatized for something that has nothing to do with you: You didn't kill anybody. You didn't drop somebody on their head.

You're innocent. But you still have to deal with it—and *how* do you deal with it? Even when you think you've had a wonderful childhood, I suspect there's always some little drop of poison—that sometimes just trails in the blood and determines how you react to other people and how you think.

MJ: Several of your novels, including this one, include descriptions of disturbing, violent, sexual crimes. Does writing about these things affect you emotionally?

TM: It does, but I have the wonderful pleasure of finishing the book and closing it. And I don't read them later.

MJ: Your writing also contains a good dose of magical realism.

TM: My childhood was full of ghost stories, and I was very taken with Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. It was a revelation that you can do those things—that you could have ghosts. That made a big difference in the way I could conceive of characters, so that it was perfectly logical for the dead girl in *Beloved* to come back. She was the only one who could judge her mother. None of *us* could.

MJ: I'm curious as to whether the title of your new book is an allusion to Billie Holiday's "God Bless the Child"?

TM: No. I had an entirely different title, which everyone hated. I'm not even gonna tell you what it was.

MJ: What was it?

TM: [Laughs.] No, I'm not going to tell you! I ended up with *God Help the Child* because Sweetness has the last word, which is, "You're gonna be parents? *Uh-huh, okay.*" Parenting changes you. You have different concerns. It's not all kitchee-kitchee-koo.

MJ: Have you ever wanted to write more about your own life experience?

TM: My editor suggested that I change a two-book contract to one novel and a memoir. And I said okay, and then I thought, "I don't think so." A memoir? What's interesting is the invention, the creative thing. Writing about myself was a yawn.

MJ: You've also worked on an opera, children's books, lyrics, and plays. Is there any other form you're eager to try?

TM: When you say it like that, I get suddenly exhausted! I don't think so. I think I'll do what pleases me most, and what most challenges me, which is the novel.

MJ: How about a novel set in the future?

TM: No. I can barely deal with now. ■

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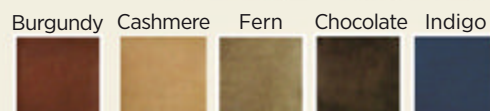
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46371

black deaths matter

[continued from page 39] His younger brother or cousin or relative will take [the retaliation] on, as they get a little older. It just keeps recycling and recycling.” There was a time when homicides mostly resulted from turf wars between neighborhoods, but now, he says, “it has spiraled a little more out of control. It’s a free-for-all.”

Homicide, at its core, is an intimate crime. In any given city, criminologist Kennedy points out, gun violence is concentrated among a small number of residents in struggling neighborhoods. When someone gets shot, the news travels quickly. “People know what happened,” Kennedy explains. “So if the criminal-justice system isn’t taking care of this, the likelihood that you’ll get your friends and a gun and take care of this goes up.”

“The person wanted for a homicide today has been shot three times by rivals over the past three years,” he says. “Many of these men are involved in violence because people are trying to hurt them. The moral territory is much murkier than we think it is from a distance.” When cops lack trust in the tiny geographic areas where most shootings occur—and where the penalties for talking to police are well understood—lots of shootings go unsolved, which leads to more shootings, and so on.

But Kennedy points to cities that turned things around. “Paterson, New Jersey, is a very tough environment that nonetheless has managed to keep its clearance rate way above the norm,” he notes—partly thanks to a community-policing model in which law enforcement agencies prioritize building trust with neighborhood groups and residents.

Chester has made its own efforts to turn things around. In 2010, after a string of homicides left four people—including a two-year-old boy—dead in just eight days, then-Mayor Wendell Butler Jr. declared a state of emergency, imposing a 9 p.m. curfew on five of the city’s most violent neighborhoods. Anyone who couldn’t give a good reason for being outside at night could be cited and charged.

Community leaders also put together anti-violence rallies, where families and residents joined police officers and city officials in National Night Out-style parties. Long says he would take neighborhood guys out to dinner on Butler’s tab as a sign of good faith. But after a while, he says,

the rallies stopped and the community’s trust in the police department waned.

In his spacious office overlooking the industrial riverfront, Chester Mayor John Linder moves deliberately like the social-sciences professor he once was. As a black teenager in the 1960s, he hung out with friends at Bennett and William Penn and watched as tension between the two housing projects seeped into the schools. “I had friends on both sides,” Linder says, laughing. “I’ve always been a politician. Nah, man. It was rough. I had to fight my way out of the William Penn sometimes.”

After working as a sheet metal mechanic at the nearby Boeing plant, Linder shifted to social services and academia, and since taking over as mayor in 2011 he has ramped up narcotics and gun enforcement as well as emergency response. But, he acknowledges, “it ain’t easy changing a culture. [People] want that crime solved, but there’s frustration. In an urban community, you get this cycle of social failure. Frustration leads to aggression. Then, if nothing’s done, there’s a stage of inaction. Then you have the explosion like in Ferguson.”

Last May, Chester launched another crackdown on violence, with its officers joining state and federal agencies to sweep the city for parole offenders. District Attorney Jack Whelan promised regular gun sweeps, and throughout the summer, officials went door to door and urged residents to file tips anonymously. In November, the city also received \$1.1 million to install surveillance cameras over the span of 25 high-crime blocks.

“You can’t stop crimes with cameras,” Linder says. “But you can solve cases with it. People are intimidated to come to court. You have the cameras, and the camera becomes the witness.”

And yet, 2014 had the highest number of homicides in Chester’s history, even as overall violent crime continued to fall. There were three homicides in the first two months of 2015, and at press time, none of them had been cleared.

EVERY AUGUST, SHERRICE Alexander-Hill holds a block party to mark her son’s death. She’s had a mural made for it—Karim wearing large sunglasses, a tight buzz cut, a cream jacket over an orange shirt—that hangs in her living room year-round. On summer nights,

Hill can hear the gunshots ripping through the William Penn Homes nearby.

People come to the block party from as far away as Washington, DC. The kids ride ponies and play on waterslides; the adults dance in the street. Many of them knew Karim, but the party has grown to encompass the families of other slain young men. “People say, ‘We having a block party this year?’ And I say, ‘If you help me!’” Hill’s nine-year-old grandson takes particular ownership. “He used to say, ‘This is all about my daddy and I’m in charge!’”

At first, Valerie Maxwell refused to go to the block party. She wasn’t ready for people to come up offering their sympathies. The following year, she relented. Her twins had heard about the waterslides and how fun it would be. “They were still young,” Valerie says. “I just had to bite down on my pride.”

When she recounts the years since her son’s death, her voice still breaks. She left her job as a medical technician at Springfield Senior Commons to focus on taking care of her six other children and moved to a safer neighborhood. Her leopard-print robe covers the tattoos on her shoulders—one side bears Emill’s initials, the other a pair of hands folded in prayer. Three portraits of Emill watch over the living room that Valerie tidies meticulously each day after dropping the now 11-year-old twins at the bus stop. When the twins recently asked to spend time at their cousin’s house in the Bennett Homes, she warned them to not go outside. Later, one of the boys told her they’d seen someone get shot outside their cousin’s window.

“This is me,” Valerie sighs. “That’s my life.” This spring, on the seventh anniversary of her son’s death, she went to his grave to lay down a fresh batch of flowers and just talk. It still feels like yesterday that Emill was alive and joking in her house. It feels like she’s in a dream, waiting to be jolted awake. Twice a year, on Emill’s birthday and on the day of his death, she calls the police department to ask for an update on the case. When she called in January, on what would’ve been his 29th birthday, she learned that the detective working the case had retired.

“I’m just not giving up. I talk about it. I *be* about it. I just don’t skip a beat,” Valerie says. “I don’t never stop calling over to the police station, and I don’t ever stop talking about my son.” ■

raiders of the lost archives

[continued from page 17] Museum, I'd missed a special exhibit called "Handbags for Hillary," a joint installation with the Clinton Library of pocketbooks given to the first lady (including one made out of socks, in honor of the family cat). The closest I came to scandal was at the Green Corner Store, purveyors of artisanal ice cream that, I was told, is whipped up in the very building "where Bill met Jessica Flowers." (Bill's alleged paramour was in fact named Jennifer.) The soda jerk who poured my small-batch lavenderade hinted that Hillary faces a more immediate challenge from another woman: She's torn between Clinton and Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren.

If the conspiracy-slinging Clinton antagonists are a bit quieter this time around, that's also because—cue the ominous voice-over and shaky-cam footage—many of the loudest ones are now dead. John Brown, a sheriff's deputy who alleged that the Clintons had murdered several Arkansans over a cocaine-trafficking operation, died in prison. Jim Johnson, the segregationist former Arkansas Supreme Court justice who lent a semblance of gravitas

to the 1994 conspiracy flick *The Clinton Chronicles*, committed suicide five years ago. The Reverend Jerry Falwell, who sold 60,000 copies of the film, died in 2007. Parker Dozhier, the trapper and bait shop owner whom Scaife paid to find dirt on the Clintons, is, like his benefactor, dead.

Others have gotten out of the game. David Brock broke bad. Ambrose Evans-Pritchard, the *Sunday Telegraph* scribe who reported in a gossip- and conspiracy-laden book that Bill liked to dance around in a black dress after doing cocaine with his brother, went back to Europe. "I think Hillary was a good secretary of state," he said in an email, although he stands by his earlier work. (He doesn't recall being shot at with Nichols.) When I reached Larry Patterson, the retired state policeman whose grudge against Bill over a forgotten transfer compelled him to talk to Brock for the Troopergate story, he was curt. "Sir, the Clintons have taught me a lesson," he said. And then he hung up.

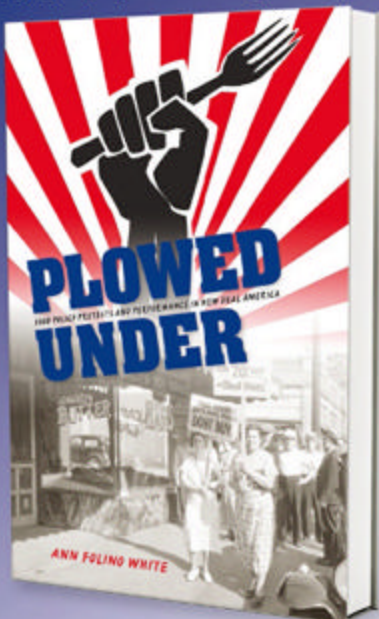
Of the original band of Clinton hunters, only Nichols kept up the ruse, doing interviews with fringe right-wing radio

hosts, even boasting in 2013 that he had been Bill's personal hit man, which he now says he didn't mean and wouldn't have said if he hadn't been on painkillers.

But something strange has come over him. After six years of watching Barack Hussein Obama cower in the face of Islamists, Nichols believes the family he spent two decades tarring as cold-blooded crooks might just be the only people who can save the country. "I'm not saying I like Hillary, you hear me?" he said, defensively. "I am *not* saying I like Hillary Rodham Clinton. I'm not saying anything I've said I take back. But God help me, I'm going to have to stand up and tell conservative patriots we have no choice but to give Hillary her shot."

"I know she won't flinch," he continued. "That's a mean sonofabitch woman that can be laying over four people and say"—he paraphrased her now-infamous response to hostile congressional questioning on the deaths of four Americans in Libya—"What the hell difference did it make?" He was against Clinton because of Whitewater. Now he's voting for her because of Benghazi. ■

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attack of the killer beetles

[continued from page 43] pines, a slight species found in the eastern Sierras of California that can live to be 1,000 years old. After mountain pine beetles ravaged one of her study sites in the late 1980s, certain trees survived. They were all around the same size and age as the surrounding trees that the beetles tore through, so Millar looked closer at tree ring records and began to suspect that, though they looked identical on the outside, the stand in fact had contained two genetically distinct groups of trees. One group had fared well during the 1800s, when the globe was still in the Little Ice Age and average temperatures were cooler. But this group

at best, the rate of mortality of trees was reduced only marginally."

Six points to a stand of lodgepoles in the University of Montana's Lubrecht Experimental Forest. In the early 2000s, school foresters preened the trees, spacing them out at even distances, and hung signs to note how this would prevent beetle outbreaks. This "prethinned" block was "the pride and joy of the experimental forest," Six remembers. But that stand was the first to get hit by encroaching pine beetles, which took out every last tree. She approached the university forest managers. "I said, 'Boy, you need to document that,'"

**For the timber industry and
its friends, beetle invasions have
been a handy excuse to open
wild areas for logging.**

weakened during the warmer 1900s, and grew more slowly as a result. Meanwhile, the second group seemed better suited for the warmer climate, and started to grow faster.

When beetle populations exploded in the 1980s, this second group mounted a much more successful battle against the bugs. After surviving the epidemic, this group of trees "ratcheted forward rapidly," Millar explains. When an outbreak flared up in the mid-2000s, the bugs failed to infiltrate any of the survivor trees in the stand. The beetles had helped pare down the trees that had adapted to the Little Ice Age, leaving behind the ones better suited to hotter weather. Millar found similar patterns in whitebark pines and thinks it's possible that this type of beetle-assisted natural selection is going on in different types of trees all over the country.

When Six read Millar's studies, she was flooded. Was it possible, she wondered, that we've been going about beetle management all wrong? "It just hit me," she says. "There is something amazing happening here."

Last year, Six and Eric Biber, a University of California-Berkeley law professor, published a provocative review paper in the journal *Forests* that challenged the Forest Service's beetle-busting strategies. After scrutinizing every study about beetle control that they could get their hands on, they concluded that "even after millions of dollars and massive efforts, suppression... has never effectively been achieved, and,

Six says. "They didn't. They just cut it down. Now there's just a field of stumps."

Six and Biber's paper came as a direct affront to some Forest Service researchers, one of whom told me that he believes changing forest structure through thinning is the only long-term solution to the beetle problem. Politicians tend to agree—and beetle suppression sometimes serves as a convenient excuse: "It is perhaps no accident that the beetle treatments most aggressively pushed for in the political landscape allow for logging activities that provide revenue and jobs for the commercial timber industry," Six and Biber wrote in the *Forests* review.

Take the Restoring Healthy Forests for Healthy Communities Act, proposed in 2013 by then-Rep. Doc Hastings (R-Wash.) and championed by then-Rep. Steve Daines (R-Mont.). The bill sought to designate "Revenue Areas" in every national forest where, to help address insect infestations, loggers would be required to clear a certain number of trees every year. Loggers could gain access to roadless areas, wilderness study areas, and other conservation sites, and once designated, their acreage could never be reduced. The zones would also be excluded from the standard environmental-review process.

Six and other scientists vehemently opposed these massive timber harvests—as did environmental advocates like the Sierra Club and Defenders of Wildlife, the latter warning that the harvests would take log-

ging to “unprecedented and unsustainable levels.” The bill passed the House but died in the Senate last year. But Daines, now a senator and one of 2014’s top 10 recipients of timber money, vows to renew the effort so as to “revitalize Montana’s timber industry” and “protect the environment for future generations.”

This summer, Six plans to start examining the genes of “supertrees”—those that survive beetle onslaughts—in stands of white-barks in Montana’s Big Hole Valley. Her findings could help inform a new kind of forest management guided by a deeper understanding of tree genes—one that beetles have had for millennia.

If we pay close enough attention, someday we may be able to learn how to think like they do. University of California-Davis plant sciences professor David Neale champions a new discipline called “landscape genomics.” At his lab in Davis, Neale operates a machine that grinds up a tree’s needles and spits out its DNA code. This technology is already being used for fruit tree breeding and planting, but Neale says it could one day be used in wild forests. “As a person, you can take your DNA and have it analyzed, and they can tell you your relative risk to some disease,” Neale says. “I’m proposing to do the same thing with a tree: I can estimate the relative risk to a change in temperature, change in moisture, introduction to a pathogen.”

Right now, foresters prune woodlands based on the size of trees’ trunks and density of their stands. If we knew more about trees’ genetic differences, Neale says, “maybe we would thin the ones that have the highest relative risks.” This application is still years off, but Neale has already assembled a group of Forest Service officials who want to learn more about landscape genomics.

Six, meanwhile, places her faith in the beetles. Whereas traditional foresters worry that failing to step in now could destroy America’s forests, Six points to nature’s resilience. Asked at TEDx how she wants to change the world, she responded, “I don’t want to change the world. We have changed the world to a point that it is barely recognizable. I think it’s time to stop thinking change and try to hold on to what beauty and function remains.” ■

This story was supported by a Middlebury College Fellowship in Environmental Journalism.

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FOOD FOR THOUGHT

How Much Sugar Are You Really Eating?

Experts recommend limiting your added sweetener to six teaspoons a day. Here's what that looks like. **BY MADDIE OATMAN**

Call us greedy, self-centered, or overly idealistic, but no one should ever accuse Americans of being bitter: We devour more added sugar than people in any other country—30 teaspoons a day by some estimates. (Indians, on the other end of the spectrum, consume just one.) The reasons go back to the 1960s, when supermarkets proliferated in US cities and readily available corn-syrupy sodas and juice drinks supplanted milk on the dinner table. By 1996, the daily calories we got from added sweeteners had increased by more than 35 percent. On top of that, during the low-fat frenzy of the 1980s and '90s, manufacturers replaced the flavorful natural oils in their products with sweeteners. “Now it’s challenging to find a food without added sugar,” says Dr. Andrew Bremer, a pediatric endocrinologist and program director in the diabetes, endocrinology, and metabolic diseases division at the National Institutes of Health. Indeed, today a full three-quarters of the packaged foods that we purchase—including everything from whole-wheat bread and breakfast cereals to salad dressings—contain extra sweeteners.

That’s a problem: Naturally occurring sugars (the kind in fruit, for example) come with fiber, which helps us regulate the absorption of food. Without fiber, sugar can overwhelm your system, even-

tually leading to obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and other health problems. Given these risks, experts suggest dramatically cutting your intake of extra sweets. In March, the World Health Organization recommended that 5 percent of your daily energy come from added sugars, which for an adult of average weight comes out to roughly six teaspoons—about 25 grams.

The trouble is that it’s hard to tell how much added sugar you’re actually eating. You’ve probably learned to spot cane juice and corn syrup, but what about barley malt, dextrose, and rice syrup—and the 56 other names for added sweeteners? What’s more, food companies aren’t required to distinguish on labels between added and naturally occurring sugars. The US Department of Agriculture used to list added sugars in an online nutrient database, but it removed this feature in 2012 after companies claimed that the exact proportion of added sugar was a trade secret. Last year, the Food and Drug Administration proposed changing nutrition labels and requiring companies to display both added and naturally occurring sugars. But industry giants like Hormel and General Mills are objecting—and even if a new label gets approved, it could still be years before packaging changes.

So absent any information on the label, what’s the best way to guess how much added sugar you’re eating over the course of a day? Using archived USDA data, we decoded some ordinary foods to find out:

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DAVID VOGIN

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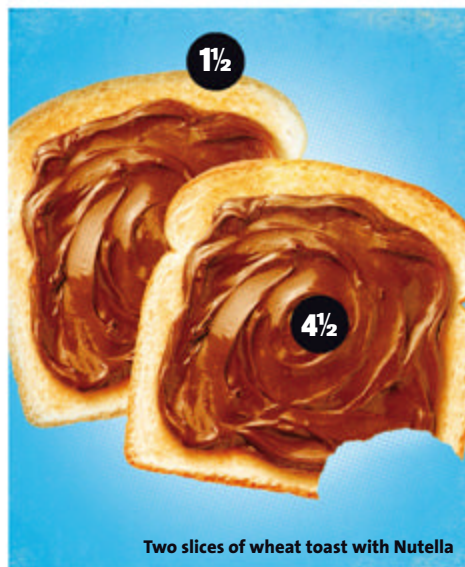
Fried rice with hoisin sauce and lemonade from a powder mix



Two gin and tonics and a handful of honey-roasted almonds



A cup of coffee with two teaspoons of sugar and a bowl of cinnamon-sugar instant oatmeal



Two slices of wheat toast with Nutella



One eight-ounce low-fat strawberry yogurt



1.3 ounces of fat-free caramel popcorn



A barbecue chicken breast, coleslaw, and a corn bread muffin



A 16.9-ounce bottle of Gatorade

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A Tale of Two Diseases

One genetic illness affects mostly people of color, another mostly white people. Which gets more funding?

BY KIERA BUTLER

Febbruary 12, 2009, was supposed to be a big day for Carlton Haywood Jr.: The newly minted Johns Hopkins professor was set to travel from Baltimore to New York City to make a presentation at an important medical meeting. But the night before he left, a searing pain started to surge through his arms and soon spread to his legs. The next morning, when he boarded the train, his whole body felt like it was on fire. By the time he reached Penn Station, he could barely make it to the emergency room.

The pain was caused by Haywood's sickle-cell disease, a genetic condition in which misshapen red blood cells build up in the blood vessels and cause infections, strokes, and excruciating episodes of pain. Having lived with sickle cell for 39 years and studied it as a bioethicist, Haywood knew the treatment he needed to stop the episode, so he requested a specific combination of medications. The hematologist, however, refused, implying that Haywood didn't know what he was talking about. Haywood wound up missing the meeting—and was in the hospital for a week.

For the 100,000 Americans with sickle cell—it's the most common life-shortening genetic disease in the United States—insults like that are routine. "We know what works best for us and what does not work so well for us," Haywood says. "But doctors often don't listen." His research has found that when sickle-cell patients ask for medication—especially opioids to control their pain—they are routinely dismissed as pill seekers, even though they are no more likely to be addicted to painkillers than the general population. Sickle-cell patients in

acute pain also face longer ER waits than other patients in acute pain.

So what's unique about sickle-cell patients? Well, about 90 percent are African American. (The trait is thought to have originated in Africa as an adaptive response to malaria.) Many researchers believe that racial discrimination plays a major role in the care that sickle-cell patients get.

Consider, for comparison, the experience of people with another life-shortening genetic illness, cystic fibrosis, a respiratory and digestive condition. Like sickle cell, it gets worse with age, requires strict daily drug regimens, and often results in hospitalization. And like sickle cell, it dramatically shortens patients' life spans—to a median of 37 years for cystic fibrosis, compared to 40 to 45 years for sickle-cell disease.

But here's one key difference: Cystic fibrosis affects mostly Caucasians. And that, suspects John Strouse, a Johns Hopkins hematologist who has compared data about the two diseases, is one reason why funding for cystic fibrosis research, drug development, and patient advocacy dwarfs that for sickle-cell disease. In 2011, the most recent year for which his data is available, spending on cystic fibrosis totaled \$254 million—nearly four times the \$66 million that was spent on sickle cell, even though the latter affects three times as many people.

In part, that's because cystic fibrosis' primary dedicated charity—the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation—is far wealthier than the dozens of sickle-cell organizations combined. In 2011, the foundation spent \$176 million on cystic fibrosis—compared to the \$1.1 million spent by the Sickle Cell Disease Association of America, the largest of the advocacy groups.

Yet the disparity isn't limited to these private funds. The National Institutes of Health spends nearly four times as much per patient on cystic fibrosis research as it does on sickle cell. From 2009 to 2011, researchers published twice as many papers on cystic fibrosis as they did on sickle cell.

"You have this kind of feedback loop,"



Strouse says. The sickle-cell community has fewer wealthy, powerful advocates, so there's less interest in research. "In order to draw attention to a disease, you need affluent people promoting it. And then, once the disease gets the attention, more people want to devote money to it"—which then leads to more research.

Case in point: In 2000, the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation invested in a pharmaceutical company that ended up developing a breakthrough treatment. When the foundation sold the rights to the drug royalties for \$3.3 billion last November, it became the richest rare-disease advocacy group in history. Even though the new drug only works for a handful of patients, the windfall will support further pharmaceutical research that may one day lead to a cure for all. "We will convene the best minds in science and medicine to [cure] cystic fibrosis at its most fundamental level," the head of the foundation wrote in a letter to supporters.

The deal, experts say, could set a precedent for other rare diseases. But if patients with big bucks bankroll research for their own conditions, Strouse wonders, then who will support the likes of sickle-cell disease? Poor parents, he notes, have fewer opportunities to be "out there raising awareness and buzz about your kid's disease. You're struggling just to get by, just to get your child to the doctor's office while holding down your job." ■

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